

Elías Capriles

BUDDHISM AND DZOGCHEN:

*THE DOCTRINE OF THE BUDDHA
AND THE SUPREME VEHICLE OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM*

PART ONE

*BUDDHISM:
A DZOGCHEN OUTLOOK*

Version 1.5

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NOTICE CONCERNING THE ENGLISH IN THIS ELECTRONIC EDITION:

IN THIS EDITION, THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR HAS NOT BEEN THOROUGHLY REVIEWED. THE ENGLISH IN THE INTRODUCTION, AND THE NOTES HAVE NOT, TO DATE, BEEN REVISED BY A QUALIFIED CORRECTOR. THE ENGLISH IN THE MAIN TEXT OF THE REST OF THE BOOK, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS REVISED, BUT SINCE THE CORRECTORS MODIFIED THE TEXT DIRECTLY TO THE COMPUTER FILE, THE AUTHOR ONLY SUCCEEDED IN MAKING THOSE CORRECTIONS THAT WERE DISCERNABLE UPON READING THE ALTERED TEXT. A MORE THOROUGH CORRECTION OF THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR AND USAGE IN THIS TEXT WILL BE CARRIED OUT BEFORE THE BOOK IS PUBLISHED ON PAPER, BY CAREFUL COMPARISON OF THE CORRECTED FILE WITH THE UNCORRECTED ONE.

READERS OF THIS VERSION ARE WELCOME TO LOOK FOR THE REPETITION OF IDEAS: THOUGH IT WAS THE AUTHOR'S INTENTION TO HAVE A CERTAIN DEGREE OF REITERATION, EXCESSIVE REPETITION IS TO BE AVOIDED. IN GENERAL, ALL TYPES OF CRITICISM BY READERS, WHETHER CONCERNING CONTENT OR REGARDING FORM, ARE VERY WELCOME, FOR CRITICISM MAY HELP IMPROVE THE TEXT PRIOR TO ITS PUBLICATION ON PAPER.

SUGGESTIONS AND CRITICISMS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED BY EMAIL
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NOTICE TO VERSION 1.2

As a result of the doubts raised by Victor Klimov, this new version features an improved discussion of dangⁱ energy, and in general of the three forms of manifestation of energy posited by the Dzogchen teachings, stressing the fact that in itself dang energy manifests as a transparent, pure, clear and limpid dimension that cannot be regarded either as internal or external and that has the nature of dharmakaya.

Modifications were done toward the end of the Section “Validity of the Tantras as Buddhist Teachings” in the Chapter “Origin, Validity and Lineages of Transmission of the Three Paths,” and immediately thereafter a new section was included called “Antecedents of Dzogchen in Pre-Buddhist Traditions,” featuring a lengthier discussion of the origins of Bönpo Dzogchen that shows that Dzogchen could not have derived from Shivaism or other traditions, and that if there were a genetic link between Dzogchen and other traditions it would have been the latter that would have been influenced by Dzogchen. Also the thesis according to which Dzogchen assimilated the “beyond action” principle from Ch’an or Zen is rejected, for it is likely Ch’an or Zen that assimilated this most characteristic Atiyoga principle from Dzogchen Masters.

Many Sanskrit and Tibetan terms that were omitted in the original version were included in this one, so that the book may be of greater use to the Buddhologist and the Tibetologist. In particular, this version includes a discussion by Elio Guarisco of the usages of the term khorsum, which I render as “triple projection.”

I also changed the translations of the terms rangdröl (*rang-grol*) and lhundrub (*lhun-grub*): now I am rendering the first as *spontaneous liberation* rather than *self-liberation*, and the second as *spontaneous perfection* rather than *self-perfection*. The first change was due to the fact that self-liberation was often understood in an utterly wrong sense as “liberation by one’s own action,” and sometimes as “liberation by one’s own power” (as different from liberation from the power of another), both of which are the very opposite of what the term really means: liberation not *caused* by any *action*, beyond the dichotomy “power of one’s own self / power of something different from one’s own self.” The second change was due to the fact that the prefix *self* does not seem to add any new content to the concepts of perfection and perfect (unless we said “self-perfected,” but then the term would suggest that perfection was not inherent to the original condition, but arose at some point later on—which is not the case), whereas the adjective *spontaneous* adds two important ideas: firstly, that the perfection referred to is not the product of anyone’s action, and secondly that what the term also refers to spontaneous processes beyond action that lead to full Awakening.

Many other corrections were done throughout the text of which I kept no track, for at the time I had no intention of posting this notice, which was a late idea of Grisha Mokhin, the administrator of the webpage in which this book is published, and a Santi Maha Sangha and Yantra Yoga instructor certified by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu. Among these, I must mention those suggested by Victor Klimov and those suggested by Jinavamsa (Mitchell Ginsberg).

In Mérida, Venezuela, on Wednesday, February 25, 2004,

Elías Capriles

ⁱ gDangs.

This book is dedicated to Chögyäl Namkhai Norbuⁱ, Tibet-born Dzogchen Master who communicates the teachings authentically in what I believe was the original way, who has diffused the way of structuring the teachings I deem most suitable for our time, and who is source of inconceivable skillful means.

ⁱ *Chos-rGyal Nam-mkha'i Nor-bu.*

INTRODUCTION

Each time someone wanted to join our Sunday meditation group, I found myself obliged to explain the theoretical base of the practice: the Four Noble Truths; the division of the Buddhist Way into three principal Paths that Nub Namkhai Nyingpoⁱ¹ explained in his *Kathang Dennga*ⁱⁱ² and Nubchen Sangye Yesheⁱⁱⁱ³ reproduced in his *Samten Migdrön*^{iv,4}; the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit in Dzogchen *Atiyoga*; the three series of teachings of this vehicle; etc. In order to save time and energy, I decided to write a booklet with these explanations; however, as I proceeded, the text became longer and more complex, and at some point I realized I was writing a book. Understanding that to do so would force me to systematize my own comprehension of the teachings and fill in whatever blanks would turn up, and realizing that there was no likes to the book I was writing, and that therefore it would be very useful to Westerners interested in Dzogchen, I decided to continue to work on it in order to make it suitable for publication.

From the moment I met my Tibetan teachers, I have given priority to practice over scholarship. In 1977, Chime Rigdzin Rinpoche^v invited me to study at Vishvabharati University in Shantiniketan, West Bengal, India; however, I opted for going into strict retreat in the mountains of Nepal instead, where until December 1982 I spent most of my time practicing the Dzogchen Menngagde^{vi} or *Upadeshavarga*. Accordingly, my purpose in writing the book was to provide a theoretical foundation for those who would devote themselves to the practice. Therefore, all explanations in it were structured in the way that I thought most convenient for making clear the essence of the essential practice and preventing distortions in its application. Yet, upon seeing the final product, I realized that understanding some passages of the book could require a certain degree of effort from those not accustomed to abstract thought.

My intent was to make the book equally useful for neophytes and experts. Since neophytes should not be required to memorize countless terms in foreign languages, I decided to incorporate translations and/or explanations each time I used Sanskrit and Tibetan words. So that experts could find in the work a generous source of specialized information, and, at the same time, neophytes could acquire a more global understanding of the book's topics, I decided to include extensive notes discussing some of the points of the regular text, which explain them in a more exhaustive way and relate them to other

ⁱ *gNubs Nam-mkha'i sNying-po.*

ⁱⁱ *bKa'-thang sDe-lnga.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes.*

^{iv} *bSam-gtan Mig-sgron.*

^v *'Chi-med Rig-'dzin Rin-po-che.*

^{vi} *Man-ngag-sde or man-ngag-gyi-sde.*

points in the teaching (often indicating why one translation and not another was used, and discussing the etymology of alternative Western terms and the meaning that they have in philosophical and ordinary language).

It was in the summer of 1998 and as a result of a little more than a month of work, that the first draft came forth; however, the text still needed careful polishing, and its extension was a fraction of the current one. Then, in September 1998 I taught in Madrid a course on the Base level of the Santi Maha Sangha training designed by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. One of those who attended the course took the draft to Ediciones La Llave, which, after examining it, offered to publish it. This led me to further improve the text, which I did during the summer of 1999; however, the publishers insisted that the book should not become too long, and that it should be ready in a short time; therefore, I was unable to polish the original Spanish language text to the degree I would have desired.

Two years after its publication in Spanish,ⁱ I decided to translate the book into English, enlarging it and polishing it so that it could provide more prepared readers with a more comprehensive explanation of the topics covered. Since at the time I was busy with other editorial projects, I posted an announcement asking for a translator. A few people replied, among whom I chose Judith Daugherty, from Oregon, USA, who in a relatively short time produced an English version of the whole book. I began working on Part One, which I expanded and polished considerably, until I realized that it would fill a whole volume. Therefore, I decided to divide the book into two or three tomes, according to how much Parts Two and Three would grow in the English version.

In this new version, I tried to express as precisely as possible the essence of the teachings, while at the same time providing ample background information, for I had the impression that, among Dzogchen books published in the West, those intended to allow the reader understand the essence of the teaching do not abound in information, and those that contain an enormous quantity of facts do not weave these facts into a global vision conveying the essence of Dzogchen and showing this teaching's place in the Buddhist universe. The fact that, with very few exceptions, quotations included in the book were taken from works in Western languages, was not the fruit of a didactic decision but of fortuitous circumstances.⁵

The title, *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, may seem strange, since the connection of two nouns by means of a copulative conjunction implies that the nouns refer to two separate and different things. However, this does not mean I believe Buddhism is one thing and Dzogchen another: I chose this title because of the way in which the work is structured:

Part One, titled "Buddhism: A Dzogchen Outlook," is devoted to Buddhism as an indivisible complex of Paths, vehicles and schools, all of which are discussed from the perspective of the Dzogchen teachings.

Part Two, called "Dzogchen: A Buddhist Outlook," discusses Dzogchen from the standpoint of Buddhism, in an attempt to convey the essence of Buddhist Dzogchen.

Part Three, named "Principle and Practices in Treading the Path," discusses the general principle of all Buddhist practices, some specific practices, and the integration of the Path as a whole into daily life, in a way that combines the various Paths and vehicles of the Ancient (Nyingmaⁱⁱ) Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

ⁱ Capriles, Elías (2000), *Budismo y dzogchén: La doctrina del Buda y el vehículo supremo del budismo tibetano*. Vitoria (Spain), Ediciones La Llave.

ⁱⁱ *rNying-ma*.

Part One, which together with this Introduction constitutes the present Volume, provides a global outlook of Buddhism as an indivisible whole of Paths, vehicles and schools,⁶ expressing the essence of this whole as precisely as possible, emphasizing the differences between the Dzogchen teaching and the rest of the Buddhist teachings, and underlining those relationships between topics, vehicles and Paths that are necessary for obtaining a sound intellectual comprehension of the Path. Since the most essential and characteristic among all Buddhist teachings is the Four Noble Truths (which was the first one that Shakyamuni Buddha gave after his Enlightenment), I structured most of Part One in terms of this teaching. (As a rule, the teachings of the various Buddhist traditions discuss the schools that flourished in the cultural milieu in which they themselves developed, but not those that arose and/or unfolded in other civilizations. In our time, however, the main cultural traits and religions of most civilizations are known in the entire world, and there is a wide diffusion of the varieties of *Theravada* Buddhism that developed in Southeast Asia and in Sri Lanka, of some of the *Mahayana* schools of China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan, and of the predominantly Tantric traditions of Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia and so forth. Therefore, it seemed convenient *not* to circumscribe the discussion of schools to those that are well known in Tibet.)

Part Two of the book focuses on the Buddhist Dzogchen teachings themselves, which constitute the Supreme Vehicle of Buddhism, but which, rather than having been taught directly by the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni, were transmitted by a lay manifestation of this *nirmanakaya* foretold in the Buddhist scriptures, called Prahevajra (in Tibetan, Garab Dorjeⁱ), who appeared several centuries after the time of Shakyamuni in the land of Oddiyana (which according to most scholars corresponds to the valley of Swat in present day Pakistan and/or to the valley of Kabul in present day Afghanistan, and that may have included nearby regions). In this part of the book, the Base, Path and Fruit of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo are discussed in terms of various threefold divisions of each of them. Likewise, the three series of teachings making up the *Atiyogatantra*, which are the Semdeⁱⁱ, the Longdeⁱⁱⁱ and the Menngagde^{iv} or *Upadeshavarga*, are considered in some detail. However, the emphasis is placed on the last of these three series (the Menngagde), which in our time is the one that is most widely practiced, and which is most effective in this time of degeneration.⁷

Finally, as noted above, Part Three of the book discusses the general principle of all Buddhist practice, in a way that combines practices and understandings proper to the Dzogchen Path with those belonging to other Paths, vehicles and practices of the Ancient Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The specific topics dealt with in this part are the dynamic of the *mandala*, the practice of *Yantra Yoga*, the ritual consumption of meat and alcohol, the guardians and the practices related to them, the practice of Chö (*gcod*), and the way to maintain the practice throughout the whole cycle of day and night.

The terminology I use in the work is still provisional. Throughout the years, I have constantly modified my translation of the Eastern terms distinctive of the different forms of Buddhist teaching, keeping the focus on the various experiential meanings of the

ⁱ *dGa'-rab rDo-rje*.

ⁱⁱ *Sems-sde*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *kLong-sde*.

^{iv} *Man-ngag-sde* or *man-ngag-gyi-sde*.

original terms (and particularly on their truest and most profound meanings),⁸ but at the same time paying attention to the etymology of Western words, and to the etymological associations that occur between some of the Eastern terms. Quite likely, in future editions of the work I will further modify the terminology, not only because the process of making terms more adequate is still going on, but also because of the feedback I may receive from readers, and of possible discussions with Tibetologists and with my present teacher, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu.

The classification of the vehicles and the very structure of the book are based on the ancient division of the Buddhist Way into three principal Paths taught in Tibet during the First Dissemination of the Doctrine, which then Nub Namkhai Nyingpo and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe codified, which much later Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu propagated in the West, and which I deem to be most suitable for our age. The three aspects of the Base, the three series of Dzogchen teachings, *Yantra Yoga* and the cycle of day and night, were discussed on the basis of the teachings transmitted by Namkhai Norbu in Venezuela (many of which I collected in *The Path of Spontaneous Liberation and the State of Total Plenitude and Perfection*, which I compiled and edited in Spanish but which has not been published as yet). In turn, many of the explanations dealing with the characteristics of the different Vehicles and the differences among them provided in Part One of the book, are based on the Base Level of the Santi Maha Sangha training devised by the same Master, to which I expect the present work may serve both as a key and as a complement.

The explanation of the Four Noble Truths that occupies a great deal of Part One, resulted from relating the Buddhist teachings with my own experience, and the brief explanations concerning Theravada Buddhism (established in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka) and the Chinese schools, as well as a large part of the rest of the relationships that are established in the book (some of them little known in the West), are based on research and studies that I have carried out during the last three decades.

Both in Part Two of the book and in some passages of Part One, the discussion of the practice of the Dzogchen Menngagde—and in particular of Tekchöⁱ—is based on my own, direct experience of the practice. In turn, the discussion of the specific principle of Thögelⁱⁱ, those points of the explanation of the four Chogzhagⁱⁱⁱ in which I am not simply following the explanations of Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu (such as the interpretation of the Gyatso Chogzhag^{iv} as absolutely panoramic awareness), and so on, were directly inferred from my own experience of the Thubthik^v and the Nyingthik^{vi}.⁹

Insofar as the realizations and learning that may obtain during the practice of the Menngagde may serve for understanding the basic principles of other practices, in Part Two I decided to explain the Four Yogas or Naljor Zhi^{vii} of the Dzogchen Semde in the tradition of Kham^{viii} as a process of “panoramification” of attention culminating in the

ⁱ *Khregs-chod*.

ⁱⁱ *Thod-rgal*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Cog-bzhag bzhi*.

^{iv} *rGya-mtsho cog-bzhag*.

^v *Thugs-thig*. Note that “thug” (*thugs*) is a synonym of the “nying” (*snying*) in “nyingthik.”

^{vi} *sNying-thig*.

^{vii} *rNal-'byor bzhi*.

^{viii} *Khams*.

definitive surpassing of attention, and explain the Selwe Daⁱ or “clarity symbol” of the Dzogchen Longde in reference to panoramic awareness. Since it would be extremely unfortunate and nefarious to corrupt the teachings with misinterpretations and illegitimate extrapolations, before making these explanations public, I consulted the Master Namkhai Norbu, who reassured me saying that it was fine to include them, although it would be good to indicate that they were derived from my own practice of the teachings.¹⁰

With respect to my practice, around 1976 or 1977 I attended the transmission of Dudjom Lingpa’sⁱⁱ Treasures and of the Dudjom Tersarⁱⁱⁱ that H. H. Dudjom Rinpoche (Jigdräl Yeshe Dorje^{iv})¹¹ gave in Boudhanath (Nepal), and shortly thereafter I received very specific private instructions for retreat from this great Master. In the same period, I received from Dudjom Rinpoche’s eldest son, Thinley Norbu Rinpoche^v, teachings on his father’s book on the practice of Tekchö in a mountain retreat and general counsels on how to optimize this practice.¹² Later on, I was offered the text of Jigme Lingpa’s *The Lion’s Roar* or *Sengge Ngaro*;^{vi} after reading it, I had a private encounter with Dodrub Chen Rinpoche, in which this Master replied to questions I had concerning the book.¹³

Of the greatest importance to me were also the personalized Dzogchen teachings I received from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche^{vii}, and the transmissions by this great Master I attended in Boudhanath (Nepal) and Clement Town (HP, India), which featured the *Rinchen Terdzö*^{viii} and other important collections of termas.¹⁴ I am also deeply indebted to Dodrub Chen Rinpoche^{ix15} and Chatral Rinpoche^x for their transmissions and lungs (although fewer in number).¹⁶

On the basis of the above teachings, I made of Tekchö (in the context of both the Thubthik and the Nyingthik) my principal practice, which I carried out intensively while I was in strict retreat in cabins and caves in the heights of the Himalayas (where I spent most of the time from 1977 until December of 1982), concerning which I wrote a book toward the end of the 1970’s,¹⁷ and which I have tried consistently to keep in daily life.

Though the book the reader has in his or her hands is the result of the digestion and assimilation, based on my personal experience of the practice, of all the teachings mentioned above, as well as of the research and study that I have carried out for decades, as I have already noted, the final criterion in terms of which the teachings were arranged and expounded was specifically the one followed by Master Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche and, in particular, that of his Santi Maha Sangha training. And as I have also noted, this is owing to the fact that I recognize in the teachings of this Master the way of transmitting both Buddhism and Dzogchen that corresponds to our time.

ⁱ *gSal-ba’i brda*.

ⁱⁱ *bDud-’joms gLing-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *bDud-’joms gTer-gsar*: the “New Treasure of Dudjom” revealed by Jigdräl Yeshe Dorje.

^{iv} *bDud-’joms Rin-po-che, ’Jigs-’bral Ye-shes rDo-rje*.

^v *Phrin-las Nor-bu Rin-po-che*.

^{vi} *Seng-ge’i nga-ro*.

^{vii} *Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse Rin-po-che*.

^{viii} *Rin-chen gTer-mdzod*.

^{ix} *rDo-grub Chen Rin-po-che*.

^x *Bya-’bral Rin-po-che*.

I am immeasurably obliged to all the above Masters for their teachings, and in particular to the late Dudjom Rinpoche, Thinle Norbu Rinpoche, the late Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Concerning the latter, I must also express my gratitude for his repeated visits to Venezuela, in which he has always given teachings that have proven to be extremely suitable both for the general public and for my own person. I also must thank him for shepherding me over the years, and for replying to my recent emails and answering the few questions I still had in connection to the contents of this book.

On a different plane, I must also express deep gratitude to Judy Daugherty, who worked so hard and against the clock in translating my *Budismo y dzogchén* into English, to Professor Rowena Hill, who did a very careful revision of the English, and to Carey Gregory, who revised the changes I made to the text after Professor Hill's correction. My gratitude to these *vajra*-sisters is even greater insofar as none of them asked for a pecuniary remuneration.

Most special thanks are due to Elio Guarisco for the research work concerning the number of levels posited in different Anuttarayogatantras, the usages of the term khorsum ('*khor gsum*'), and the origin of the term drodok (*sgro 'dogs*, equivalent of the Sanskrit *samaropa* or *adhyaropa*); to Adriano Clemente for his help with the *Vairo Drabag's* explanation of the origin of the outer Tantras; to Jim Valby and Edgar M. Cooke and for their help with the Bibliography; to Victor Klimov for carefully proofreading the book, pointing out an important omission in the explanation of dangⁱ energy, suggesting that I included the Sanskrit and Tibetan words for five omnipresent mental factors or mental events and for the term 'triple projection', as well as for other contributions; to Jinavamsa (Mitchell Ginsberg) for proofreading the text and suggesting the original spelling for the Pali *anicca* found in the book (which was necessary for the transliteration of Pali to be in line with that I had chosen for the Sanskrit); and to David Meyer for having sent me his personal copy of Guenther, Herbert V., 1977 (which I needed for completing both the present book and the one called *Clear Discrimination of Views Pointing at the Definitive Meaning: The Philosophical Schools of the Sutrāyāna Traditionally Taught in Tibet [With Reference to the Dzogchen Teachings]*). As in the case of the above Vajra sisters, none of them asked for a pecuniary remuneration.

Finally, a most special recognition is owed to Grisha Mokhin for freely offering me the webpage in which the electronic version of this book was originally published and for the wonderful—and equally free—work in preparing that webpage.¹⁸

Elías Capriles

Mérida, Venezuela, November 25, 2003

ⁱ *gDangs*.

METHODOLOGY AND TIPS FOR READING THIS BOOK

Concerning the way in which this book ideally should be read, I must warn that, since the length of some of the explanations in them made it impossible to include the notes at the bottom of the page, and since the latter's contents often are quite complex, consulting them systematically during the initial reading of the book could make it hard for some readers to maintain the continuity of the regular text. Therefore, I think some readers may find it more convenient, on the initial reading, not to consult the endnotes. Nevertheless, the latter contain information that I deem quite important and essential—to such a degree that they constitute a parallel text, which to some extent may be viewed as a commentary on the regular text. Therefore, if the first reading of the regular text elicits sufficient interest in the readers, I would advise them to do a second reading, this time stopping to read each note with the purpose of interweaving the two parallel texts that coexist in the work.

Since this book is the result of interpreting, in terms of my personal experience of the practice, a way of explaining the whole of the Buddhist teachings that has been quite uncommon for centuries, the correct way to connect the information contained here with that conveyed by other books on the same subject, would not be through merely *adding* the one and the other, but, rather, through *contrasting* the ideas in this one with those in most other ones.¹⁹ As noted already, my interest has not been to provide complex data incomprehensible to those without a broad academic and/or yogic background in the field of Tibetan Buddhism, but, *with an eye on the practice*, to allow whoever may read this book to truly understand what the Dzogchen teachings are; how their validity is proven and their special qualities are recognized; and how they relate to the life and experience of each individual, as well as to the totality of the Buddhist systems. Simultaneously, I have tried to rectify inaccurate information diffused in books published in the West about Dzogchen and the teachings of the Nyingmapa or “Old School” of Tibetan Buddhism.

Terminology and Titles of Eastern Texts

When the different types of Buddhist works were translated into Tibetan at the time of the first dissemination of Buddhism in the Land of the Snows, this was done by a team of interpreters, many of who were highly realized, and who worked coordinately under the supervision of the greatest Masters. Thus, they not only managed to render the true purport of the texts, favoring the meaning over the letter, but often meliorated the expression of the true sense of the works, and devised translations for the original terms that often were etymologically more accurate than the originals. Furthermore, their renderings of the titles of the books they translated were universally admitted in the new

language, so that all scholars automatically knew which was the canonical text or original treatise referred to by a given Tibetan title.

The above would also be the best way to translate the original Buddhist texts into Western languages and to write original treatises in these languages. Likewise, it would be best to refer to both the canonical texts and the tractates and commentaries by their Western names. However, here it has been impossible either to follow a pre-established terminology or to cite the original works by their English names, for the translators and authors who have rendered into Western languages the original Buddhist terms and the titles of Buddhist works have not done so in a concerted way. Furthermore, most of them are not realized individuals, and did not work coordinately under the supervision of the greatest Masters, and so sometimes their terminology has been clumsy and misleading. Furthermore, since in the different works readers do not find a homogeneous terminology (some works leave many terms in Sanskrit or Tibetan, and those who translate them do so in different ways), it is hardly possible for them to understand correctly and exhaustively the concepts conveyed by the terms. In the case of the translations of the titles of original texts, when the readers come upon them, they cannot determine precisely what original texts they refer to (except in those cases in which the translator included a Bibliography with the original Eastern titles, provided that the reader takes the time to consult it every time he or she finds a reference to a text).

This is the reason why I decided not to proceed in the ideal way expressed above. I am aware that for Buddhism to become firmly established in the West, a consensus terminology will have to be devised, and consensus titles for the original works will have to be established. However, some terms have such a wide range of meanings that it seems impossible to find a universal translation for them, and in the case of those terms that can be translated, I cannot use any established system of translation insofar as I do not agree with any of the systems produced so far. Furthermore, I decided not to translate the titles of original texts into Western languages, for this would do nothing but add to the existing Buddhist Babel.²⁰ I hope in the near future a correct terminology may be established and an ample consensus about it may be reached, so that Buddhism may become more firmly established in the West.

However, I did make some unconventional use of specific terms, and hence some warnings must be made concerning them. For example, whenever I needed to use terms that etymologically and/or lexicographically have a dualistic meaning for referring to the surpassing of dualistic delusion, I capitalized them. For example, “contemplation” refers to the action of placing attention on some material or spiritual phenomenon, which is a function of the subject/object duality and the mind that, according to Dzogchen teachings, are the very core of human delusion; therefore, whenever I use this noun for referring to the continuity of the unveiling of the nondual condition, I capitalize it, writing it as “Contemplation.” Likewise, “presence” designates an undistracted dualistic attention, as corresponds to the Platonic definition of the term, which is “being before;” therefore, whenever I used it to refer to the absence of distraction with respect to the patency of our true condition, beyond dualism and delusion, I capitalized it, writing it as “Presence.” The same applies to terms such as “Awake Awareness,” “Truth,” “Behavior,” “Refuge” and so on: when they are written with a capital letter, I am using them to refer to the nondual condition free from delusion or error.

Finally, I was compelled to coin a set of neologisms, which I have to explain so that readers will not be puzzled when they come upon them. Dzogchen texts often speak of recognizing thoughts as the *dharmakaya*, or of recognizing the true condition, essence or nature of thoughts, etc. In all such cases, what the texts are referring to is *not* what normally we understand for “recognition,” which is the understanding of a pattern (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., *tsenpe*ⁱ) in terms of a delusive concept, but the surpassing of recognition in the unveiling of primordial Gnosis—upon which the true condition of the thoughts (or whatever the original texts say must be recognized) manifests. In order to make clear the distinction between what the texts refer to, and what is usually termed “recognition,” I decided to coin the set of neologisms comprising the terms “reGnition,” “reGnize,” and so on. The precedents and shortcomings of these terms are discussed in a note.²¹

Use of Terms in Asian Languages

Because of the methodology I summarized in the above section, throughout this book many words in Sanskrit and in Tibetan will continually turn up. However, again and again I explain their meaning, no matter how redundant the text may become, for I do not want readers to have to memorize a long list of words in foreign languages: as noted in the first section of this Introduction, my intent is that they may easily understand the meaning of the explanations and relate them to their own experience and life.

The doctrines of the First Promulgation, which the *Mahayana* and other vehicles refer to as the *Hinayana* (such as, for example, the Four Noble Truths), were codified in the earlier Buddhist Canon, which was written in the Pali language. However, except in some selected passages dealing specifically with the *Theravada* and the *Hinayana*, when explaining these doctrines I use the Sanskrit equivalents of the original terms, providing the Pali original and the Tibetan translation in a note the first time a term is used.²²

Translation and Romanization System and Pronunciation of Eastern Names and Terms

Tibetan words have been transliterated phonetically in such a way as to make their natural pronunciation by an English speaking person approximate to a certain extent the pronunciation of Central Tibet, but also as to allow the advertent reader to approximate the pronunciation of Kham. However, my phonetic transliterations do not allow either the *faithful* reproduction of any Tibetan pronunciation, or the reconstruction by a Tibetologist of the original term. Therefore, each and every time an important Tibetan term or name is used for the first time, in a footnote the reader is offered its transliteration in the Wylie system, which all Western specialists know and which allows for the exact reconstruction of the original term.

Concerning the phonetic transliteration of terms, it is necessary to be aware of the following:

When original terms are given in italics within parentheses with no indication of the language they are in, the reader should assume that they are in Sanskrit (in those rare occasions in which this rule is not followed, their language is indicated in a footnote).

ⁱ *mTshan-dpe*.

Words belonging to other languages, and Sanskrit terms when they are accompanied by terms in other languages, in most cases are preceded by an indication of the language to which they belong. While terms in Pali and in the language of Oddiyana are also given in italics, Tibetan terms are written in regular script and in a phonetic approximation, and, as noted above, the Willye transliteration is given in italics in an accompanying footnote the first time a term is used.

In Sanskrit and Pali terms the diacritical marks were omitted (I am writing with a standard computer program, as I do not want the text to look overloaded), and therefore some letters had to be modified so as to allow laymen to have a loose idea of their pronunciation. In particular, an “h” or an “i” were added to the syllables that needed it for English-speaking laymen to be able to produce a loosely approximate pronunciation; for example, since “*vr̥tti*,” for example, sounds approximately as “vrit̥ti,” I Romanize it as *vr̥tti*; in terms such as “*Siva*” or “*risi*,” in which the “s” (to a greater or lesser degree, according to the case) sounds like a “sh,” I add an “h” and write *Shiva* and *rishi*. I do the same with terms such as “*citta*,” which sounds “chitta:” I add an “h” and write it as *chitta*. When there is a “v” after “s” and “sh,” I write it as “w,” even though the resulting pronunciation will not be so accurate. “G” before “i” and “e” sounds like in German (i.e., as it would sound before a, o and u in English words). Though “ñ” sounds like in Spanish (i.e., it sounds “ny”), the combination “jñ” sounds somehow between “gñ” and “gj.”²³ In turn, the combinations “ph” and “th” do not sound close to “f” and “d,” respectively, but as an aspirated “p” and an aspirated “t.” And so on.

Concerning the phonetic transcription of Tibetan, in general “ö” sounds like in German (i.e., like a French “e” or an “œ”): molding the lips as though one were to pronounce an “o,” one pronounces an “ai” (i.e., a Spanish or Italian “e”). “Ü” is pronounced like in German (i.e., like a French “u”): placing the lips as though one were to pronounce a “u,” one pronounces an “ee.” The sound of “zh” is a bit like that of the combination “sh,” but is much closer to that of a French “j.” And, like in Sanskrit, the combinations “ph” and “th” do not sound close to “f” and “d,” respectively, but as an aspirated “p” and an aspirated “t.”

In particular, so that the English-speaking layman may approximate both the pronunciation of Central Tibet and that of Khamⁱ, she or he must bear in mind the following: syllables such as “gy” “ky” and “khy” will be pronounced by a Central Tibetan as a “gy,” “ky” or “khy,” but a Khampa will pronounce them approximately as “gjy,” “kjy” or “khjy” (placing a greater or lesser emphasis on the “j” both according to the varieties of Khampa pronunciation and to the combination of letters). For example, a Central Tibetan will pronounce the combination “ghye” as “ghye,” but a Khampa may pronounce approximately it as “ghjye;” in turn, a Central Tibetan will pronounce “khyi” as “khyi,” but a Khampa might pronounce it almost as “jee.”²⁴

To conclude, the genitive termination *a’i* was rendered as “ai,” to be pronounced “ai” or “ie” according to the pronunciation of the region of Tibet one may choose to follow. In turn, the vowel I transcribe as “ä” may be pronounced as “a,” as “ai” (i.e., like a Spanish or Italian “e”), or somewhere between the two sounds, according to the origin of the individual whose pronunciation one may choose to imitate.

ⁱ *Khams*.

PART I

BUDDHISM

A DZOGCHEN OUTLOOK

THE *BUDDHA* SHAKYAMUNI AND THE TEACHINGS HE TRANSMITTED ON THE *NIRMANAKAYA* LEVEL

THE *BUDDHA* SHAKYAMUNI AND THE BUDDHISM OF THE FIRST PROMULGATION

There is consensus among present day historians that the Indo-Europeans or Aryans were rustic warriors who initiated their expansion from the Caucasus (most likely from a strip of land extending from a small stretch of the Western coast of the Caspian sea to a longer stretch of the northern shores of the Black sea) or other regions of Europe or even the Middle East,²⁵ and arrived in India as blood-thirsty invaders and looters after the year 1,500 BC. In the Indus valley they confronted the Dravidian civilization, whose members spoke a language related to the Elamite,ⁱ while in the slopes of the Himalayas there were peoples speaking Tibeto-Burmese languages,²⁶ who seemingly had a close relationship with the Dravidians and who most likely were at the root of the latter's' doctrines and practices of individual liberation and mystic communion.²⁷ The Indo-Europeans defeated and subjugated the Dravidians and imposed their bellicose religion on them,ⁱⁱ which progressively absorbed the doctrines of the conquered and, still at an early stage, was codified into the *Samhiti* collection of *Vedas*, doctrinal basis of Brahmanism. Absorption of the doctrines and spiritual practices that hitherto prevailed in the Indian subcontinent gave rise to the mystical Monism of the *Atharvaveda*, subsequently perfected in the *Upanishads*, which put in writing some of the "secret doctrines" that with the passing of time had become indissolubly associated with the *Vedas*.ⁱⁱⁱ However, the practices and doctrines of the Dravidians and the peoples on the slopes of the Himalayas probably retained a purer form in the underground oral traditions of the conquered, until, at some point, some of them were compiled in the *Puranas* and, long after that, others surfaced in the Tantric teachings.^{iv28} Their purest form and quintessence manifested, independently of the lineal transmission of the ancient tradition, when the teachings of Buddhist

ⁱ This has been "demonstrated" by David McAlpin. Cf. Bocchi, Gianluca and Mauro Ceruti, 1993.

ⁱⁱ For an account of the bellicose character of the religion of the Indo-Europeans, see Eisler, Riane, 1987, Bocchi, Gianluca and Mauro Ceruti, 1993, as well as Gimbutas, Marija, 1989 and Gimbutas, Marija, 1982. However, as rightly pointed out in Radford-Ruether, Rosemary, 1992, this Ed. 1994, this does not mean that the agricultural peoples of Eurasia that later on were conquered and dominated by the Semitic and Indo-European peoples were totally non-violent, as were human beings in the Golden Age: violence was less developed among the agricultural peoples in question, but it had already developed to some extent.

ⁱⁱⁱ Capriles, Elías, 1998a. See also Capriles, Elías, 2000b.

^{iv} *Ibidem*.

Dzogchenⁱ and *Vajrayana* Tantrism were compiled, mainly in Oddiyana and neighboring Central Asian countries.²⁹

Prince Gautama Siddhartha, who upon Awakening became the Buddha Shakyamuni or “Sage of the Shakya [clan],” lived in the sixth and fifth centuries BC (his lifetime has been dated 563-483 BC³⁰), at a time when Brahmanism had already consolidated, the caste system had been successfully imposed, and the mystics called *rishi* or “Seers,” having adapted to Vedic orthodoxy, had codified the early *Upanishads*. It so happened that according to an astrological prediction this princely member of the *Kshatriya* caste would become a *Chakravartin*—a term that may indicate either a universal monarch or an Awake sage who reintroduces into the human world the doctrines and practices leading to Awakening after these have been lost. Since his father, a king, wanted him to become the former and not the latter by any means, he was raised in a way his parents believed would prevent him from reflecting on the meaning of life or turning to the spiritual life: he was glutted with pleasures and isolated from the hardships of life. However, in spite of this (or perhaps to some extent precisely *because* of it),³¹ Gautama Siddhartha came to experience a tremendous sense of existential lack, an overwhelming feeling of missing the point. And, diametrically against his father’s dearest hopes, this experience of the inherently suffering character of the human reality compelled him to search for the meaning of human existence and for the way of putting an end to that lack, not only in himself, but in others as well.

This search led him to leave home, giving up his wife and newborn child, his five hundred secondary consorts, his royal dishes, his choice luxuries and the whole of his royal privileges, in order to wander as a mendicant ascetic seeking suitable spiritual preceptors. The two gurus among the many who were offering their services at the time in India whom, owing to their higher spiritual attainments, he successively followed, regularly entered the highest produced and conditioned (Pali, *sankhata*; Skt., *samskrita*; Tib., *düje*ⁱⁱ) meditative states. However, it did not take long for the royal ascetic to understand that the liberation he was pursuing was not to be found in such feats, for all that is conditioned and produced is impermanent and therefore could not provide either his own person or the countless beings embraced by his compassion with a definitive solution to the “problem of life.” The future Buddha Shakyamuni would have to find for himself such definitive solution, which, as he was quick to discover, could only lie in the uncompounded, unconditioned and unborn (Pali, *asankhata*; Skt., *asamskrita*; Tib., *dümaje*ⁱⁱⁱ).

In fact, after many vicissitudes, the mendicant prince sat down under the Bodhi tree and decided not to get up again until Awakening would dawn on him. It is said that Mara, the demon, representing the principle of confusion and deceit in the human mind, sent his daughters (the *apsara*) to seduce him, and then a host of demons to terrorize him, but the future Buddha remained impassive. When the morning star arose, its presence Awoke Gautama Siddhartha from his absorption into the true nature both of his own self and of the whole of reality: he had become the Buddha or “Awake One” of our era.

Instead of claiming to have discovered something hitherto unknown, Shakyamuni said he had found the truth “of the *rishi* of antiquity” (i.e., of the Seers who, since the

ⁱ *rDzogs-chen*; the complete word is *rdzogs-pa chenpo*.

ⁱⁱ *'Dus-byas*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *'Dus-ma-byas*.

most ancient times, practiced the doctrines leading to liberation and mystic communion). However, intent on preventing deviations such as those he observed in his teachers, the Buddha dissociated himself from the Vedic tenets and taught a new doctrine that made it clear that all that was born or produced was impermanent (Skt, *anitya*; Pali, *aniccha*) and therefore that *produced* states sooner or later would dissolve and thus could not represent a definitive salvation: definitive liberation could lie solely in the unborn, un compounded, unoriginated and unconditioned, which alone was not impermanent. To the Vedic concept of *atman* (soul or self), he opposed the negative concept of *anatman* (Pali, *anatta*), thus denying true existence, not only to the individual soul or *jivatman*, but also to any universal God or substance.³² In fact, the explanation in the *Upanishads* according to which all entities were like utensils made of clay, their true reality being the clay common to all of them rather than the distinguishing features of each, lent itself too easily to taking a pseudo-totality as object and then identifying with it in order to obliterate the subject-object duality,ⁱ in the belief that this was the direct unveiling of absolute reality (which was the error of his teachers, who mistook for the absolute truth the peak of conditioned existence they regularly entered).³³ Furthermore, in the order he founded, he admitted individuals of all castes and of both genders, breaking Vedic limitations. Buddhism is, therefore, a separate, independent religion; however, as can be clearly appreciated in the following excerpt from the *Kalama Sutra* (a text belonging to the First Promulgation or *dharmachakra*), its critical attitude is more proper to philosophy:

Do not believe in the strength of traditions, however much they may have been honored for many generations and in many places; do not believe anything because many people speak of it; do not believe in the power of sages of old times; do not believe that which you yourselves have imagined, thinking that a god has inspired you. Believe nothing that depends solely on the authority of your teachers or priests. After investigation, believe that which you yourselves have tested and found reasonable, and that is for your good and that of others.

The first teaching of the Buddha was that of the Four Noble Truths, the original form of which is reputed to have been the following: (1) Human life is characterized by *duhkha*ⁱⁱ: dissatisfaction and suffering. (2) The cause of dissatisfaction and suffering is *trishna*ⁱⁱⁱ: a basic craving, which is called *kama-trishna* in the case of craving for pleasure, *bhava-trishna* or thirst-for-existence in the case of the more basic compulsion to assert, confirm and maintain oneself as an inherently existent, important, separate individual, and to fill the concomitant sensation of lack, or *vibhava-trishna* when this thirst or craving turns toward self-annihilation. (3) If the causes of dissatisfaction and suffering are uprooted, these come to an end in *nirvana*^{iv}: cessation of the essential craving that is *trishna*, and of the dissatisfaction and suffering that issue from that craving.³⁴ (4) There is a way leading to this end, which is *marga*^v: the Path for putting an

ⁱ Skt. *grahaka-grahya* (Tib. 'dzin - gzung), *vishayi-vishaya/artha* (Tib. *chos can - yul/don*) or *dharmin-jñeya* (Tib. *chos can/yul can - shes bya*). (In Sanskrit the normal order of the terms is the inverse of the English: *grahya-grahaka*, *vishaya-vishayi*, etc.)

ⁱⁱ Pali, *duhkha*; Tib., *sdug-bsngal*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pali, *tanha*; Tib., *sred-pa*.

^{iv} Pali, *nibbana*; Tib., *mya ngan-las 'das-pa*.

^v Pali, *magga*; Tib., *lam*.

end to our basic craving, and therefore to dissatisfaction and suffering, in the attainment of cessation or *nirvana*.

The teachings Shakyamuni gave during the period in which he transmitted the Four Noble Truths constitute the first *dharmachakra* or “Promulgation of a cycle of teachings,”³⁵ which is the canonical source of all of the schools that the *Mahayana* refers to as *Hinayana* or “Narrow Vehicle,” including the *Theravada*³⁶ (“which adheres to the ancient”), which is the only school of this vehicle still existing independently, and which prevails in wide regions of Southeast Asia (including most of Myanmar and Thailand, Laos and Kampuchea, and part of Vietnam) and in most of Sri Lanka. In Tibet and its ambit of cultural influence, the doctrines of two other *Hinayana* schools (the *Vaibhashika* and *Sautrantika*) have been taught until our days as part of the *curricula* of Buddhist philosophy in Tibetan Buddhist schools that do not adhere to the *Hinayana*, but these two schools no longer exist in an independent manner. (For a brief review of the latter, the reader is referred to my book *The Four Philosophical Schools of the Sutravāna Traditionally Taught in Tibet: With Reference to the Dzogchen Teachings*.)³⁷

The aim of the *Hinayana* is the attainment of individual liberation with respect to the *duhkha* (dissatisfaction and suffering) that is the First Noble Truth and to the existence marked by *duhkha* that is known as *samsara* (Tibetan: *khorma*)³⁸ or “cyclic existence” (a concept that will be explained later on), to be achieved by means of the cessation of the basic craving that is the Second Noble Truth and of the concomitant illusion of being a substantial, separate individual. A brief description of the teachings of this period will be provided in a later chapter to Part One of this book, where the *Sutravāna* vehicles of Buddhism are reviewed.

The Theravada School

According to the official accounts of the evolution of the Buddhist tradition based on the First Promulgation, eighteen different Schools arose through successive divisions of the original trunk of that tradition. The first division gave rise to four schools: the *Aryasarvastivada*, the *Aryasammitiya*, the *Aryamahasamghika* and the *Aryasthavira*. With the passing of time, the *Aryasarvastivada* subdivided, giving rise to the *Kashyapiya*, the *Mahishasaka*, the *Dharmaguptaka*, the *Bahushrutiya*, the *Tamrashatiya*, the *Vibhajyavada*, and the *Mulasarvastivadin*. In its turn the *Aryasammitiya* subdivided into the *Kaurukullika*, the *Avantaka* and the *Vatsiputriya*. The *Aryamahasamghika* subdivided, giving rise to the *Purvashaila*, the *Uttarashaila*, the *Haimavata*, the *Lokottaravada*, and the *Prajñaptivada*. Finally, the *Aryasthavira* divided into the *Mahaviharavadin*, the *Jetavaniya* and the *Abhayagirivasin*.ⁱⁱ Thus the eighteen schools that the *Mahayana* classified as *Hinayana*, are: the *Kashyapiya*, the *Mahishasaka*, the *Dharmaguptaka*, the *Bahushrutiya*, the *Tamrashatiya*, the *Vibhajyavada*, the *Mulasarvastivadin*, the *Kaurukullika*, the *Avantaka*, the *Vatsiputriya*, the *Purvashaila*, the *Uttarashaila*, the *Haimavata*, the *Lokottaravada*, the *Prajñaptivada*, the *Mahaviharavadin*, the *Jetavaniya* and the *Abhayagirivasin*.³⁹

ⁱ *Khor-ba*.

ⁱⁱ Cf. Gö Lotsawa Zhönnupel, 2d English Ed., 1976, pp. 27-33. An extremely brief account is provided in Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. II, pp. 175-6.

The *Theravada* developed within the *Mahasthavira* or *Aryasthavira* School (one of the first four, which, as noted above, then subdivided into the *Mahaviharavadin*, the *Jetavaniya* and the *Abhayagirivasin*), having been founded by Moggaliputta Tissa in the “Council of the Pali School” King Ashoka urged him to organize, which finally convened around 244 BC.⁴⁰ The Council summoned by Moggaliputta Tissa excluded the monks opposed to his theses, which he refuted in his *Kathavatthu* (which subsequently was incorporated to the *Abhidharma* of the Theravada). In Ceylon, the new doctrine was adopted by the monks who adhered to the *Mahaviharavada* (which, as stated above, was a subdivision of the *Mahasthavira* School). Later on, the *Theravada* divided into *Mahishasaka* (from which the *Dharmaguptaka* sprung) and *Kashyapiya*.

Since neither the *Theravada*, nor the eighteen earlier schools of Buddhism, were ever taught in the Land of the Snows, none of them was recurrently mentioned in Tibetan texts dealing with the philosophical traditions of Buddhism. Furthermore, since that school was not one of the eighteen original ones, even some Indian authors refused to consider it as a separate system, and opted for classifying it among the Sarvastivadin or “realistic.”ⁱ

According to this school, “physical” entities are made of atoms, but these atoms are not static units existing in a concrete and discrete manner, but dynamic processes. In turn, all that we call “mental” is constituted by indivisible mental factors or mental events, which according to this school (and contradicting the view of the Vaibhashikas, which is reviewed in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004), are not in diametrical opposition to the “physical” world. Finally, the individual or “self” is nothing but an illusion produced by the interaction of the five *skandha* or aggregates—which are *rupa* or form, *vedana* or sensation, *samjñā* or recognition, *samskara* or mental formations, and *vijñāna* or consciousness.⁴¹

The *Theravada* posited two types of space: the one that manifests between solid bodies and the space that is perceived in meditation. The second type of space is neither a reality nor an abstraction having no correlate in experience. The *Atthasalini* (a text attributed to Buddhaghosha) states:

The infinitude of space is a sphere in the sense of being a basis for a meditative experience with all the psychological functions that sustain it or that somehow support it.

The reader interested in further exploring the *Theravada* is directed to the English language publications of that school,ⁱⁱ which will no doubt be more faithful to its views than whatever a practitioner of other Buddhist traditions may write about it.

THE MAHAYANA OR “WIDER VEHICLE” AND THE THREE PROMULGATIONS

ⁱ Among other authors, S. Radhakrishnan, the ex-president of India, does this in Radhakrishnan, S., 1923/1929.

ⁱⁱ For example, those published by the Maha Bodhi Society in Calcutta, India; those published in the countries in which the Theravada prevails; and the growing number of those published in the West.

With the passing of time, the rest of the teachings given by Shakyamuni in his *nirmanakaya*, physical form, were successively codified. As we have seen, the later codifications referred to the Buddhism of First Promulgation as the *Hinayana* or “Narrow Vehicle,” and designated themselves as the *Mahayana* or “Wider Vehicle,” precisely insofar as they are not centered principally in a selfish search for personal liberation with respect to suffering, but give precedence to working for the liberation of the totality of sentient beings (in fact, it is said that the *bodhisattva*, who is the archetypal practitioner of this type of Buddhism, refuses to enter *nirvana* for as long as all other beings have not entered it), and insofar as they privilege the nature of intentions over that of human acts, which results in greater freedom of choice and responsibility for the individual.⁴² Another important difference between the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana* is that, whereas the former denied the existence of an independent “I” or soul, but not that there were material objects constituted by absolutely true, self-existing atoms,⁴³ the *Mahayana* also denied the inherent existence of atoms. This is directly related to the fact that the *Mahayana* asserts the voidness of self-being (Skt. *swabhava shunyata*; Tib. rangzhinggyi tongpanyiⁱ) or absence of an independent self-nature (Skt., *nairatmya*; Tib., dagmeⁱⁱ), not only of human individuals, who are subject as well as objects, but also of the entities which appear to beings of our time solely as object and in which we perceive no subjectivity.⁴⁴

It was the *Samdhinirmochanasutra* that classified the teachings that Shakyamuni taught on the *nirmanakaya* level (that is, in his physical body), into the renowned “three Promulgations of a cycleⁱⁱⁱ of teachings^{iv}” (Skt., *triparivartadharmachakrapravartana*; Tib., chökhör [rimpa] sum^v). The First of the three Promulgations, which was initiated by the *Dharmachakrapravartanasutra*^{vi}, in which the Four Noble Truths were expounded, is regarded as the source of the totality of the teachings of the *Hinayana*, and therefore its canonical texts, though admitted by the *Mahayana* as genuine teachings of the Buddha, are regarded by the various schools and streams of the Wider Vehicle as having a merely provisional meaning (Skt., *neyartha*; Tib., drangdön^{vii}). Obviously, this is not the opinion of the various schools of the *Hinayana*, according to which the canonical texts belonging to this Promulgation were the only ones that the Buddha Shakyamuni ever taught.

The sutras of the Second and Third Promulgations are the canonical basis of the Indian, Gradual *Mahayana*, which stresses the progressive development of *bodhichitta*, and which contains the *Madhyamaka* and *Yogachara* schools, which were reviewed in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004. However, as will be shown later on, some of the sutras of *both* Promulgations contain elements that lend themselves to a “Sudden Awakening” interpretation,⁴⁵ and both initiators of the *Madhyamaka* School, as well as one of the initiators of the *Yogachara* School, are listed among the links in the transmission of the school transmitting the sudden method, which will be considered in a later chapter.⁴⁶

ⁱ rang bzhiing gyis stong pa nyid.

ⁱⁱ bDag-med.

ⁱⁱⁱ Skt., *chakra*; Tib., tsakhör (*rtsa-'khor*).

^{iv} Skt., *dharma*; Tib., chö (*chos*).

^v *Chos-'khor (rim-pa) gsum*.

^{vi} Pali, *Dhamma-chakka-pavattana-sutta*.

^{vii} *Drang-don*.

In the Second Promulgation, which took place at Vulture’s Peak, near Rājghrī, in what nowadays is the Indian state of Bihar, Shakyamuni, often through the higher bodhisattvas accompanying him, transmitted the teachings corresponding to the *Prajñāparamita*: the discriminative wisdom leading from “this shore” (*samsara*) to the “other shore” (Awakening).⁴⁷ Some texts remark that Shakyamuni realized that his immediate disciples in the Buddhist order were shravakas or “listeners” and thus were suited to receive the teachings of the *Hinayana*, but would have been frightened by the *Mahayana* teachings of the *Prajñāparamita*, which required greater spiritual courage, as they posited a far more thorough conception of the emptiness or voidness (Pali, *suññata*; Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., *tongpanyi*ⁱ; Chinese, *wu*; Japanese, *ku*⁴⁸) of entities. Therefore, according to those sources, he left the *Prajñāparamita* teachings in the custody of the nagas, for them to be revealed over half millennium later by *Mahayana* mystic and philosopher Nagarjuna,⁴⁹ who lived at the beginning of the Christian era (according to most Western scholars, around the second century AD).⁵⁰ Furthermore, action sustains and reinforces the delusion that an inherently existing being is acting; therefore, the sutras of this Promulgation stressed the fact that there is no way action could ever lead to Awakening, which consists in going beyond delusion—an emphasis that, however, was not suited to beings of lower capacities, as it could lead them into a state of apathy rather than spurring them to engage in the practice of the teachings.

In interpreting the *Prajñāparamita* Sutras in his commentaries and treatises, Nagarjuna and his direct disciple, Aryadeva, gave rise to the *Madhyamaka* School, which was further developed by a series of scholars and Masters over successive generations. These sutras emphasized the fact that the delusion that Buddhism called *avidya* or marigpaⁱⁱ involved taking the insubstantial to be substantial, the dependent to exist inherently, the relative to be absolute, and so on. Intent on clarifying the nature of this delusion, in many of their outer treatises these Masters explained emptiness or voidness as the lack of self-existence and substance of entities (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., *rangzhinggyi tongpanyi*ⁱⁱⁱ), giving rise to the Rangtongpa^{iv} subschools of *Madhyamaka* philosophy, which are the *Prasangika* and the *Swatantrika*.⁵¹ As we confuse our deluded thoughts with what they interpret, we come to experience a plethora of phenomena as though they were self-existent, as though they inherently possessed such and such qualities, etc. However, this is a gross delusion, for phenomena in general, whether of the type that we call “mental” or of the type that we designate as “material,” whether subjects or objects,⁵² lack the self-existence and substance that individuals possessed by the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa perceive them as having, and no map in terms of thoughts can correspond exactly to the territory of the given, for nothing that can be asserted concerning any region of reality or entity whatsoever can exactly correspond to it or exhaust it. Since the experience of beings in *samsara* is produced by adherence to the delusory contents of our thoughts, the early *Madhyamikas* (i.e., the early adherents of the *Madhyamaka* School), and later on the representatives of the *Prasangika* subschool, set to refute the statements that common sense, religion and philosophy make with respect to reality, so as to give *samsaric* beings the possibility of Awakening to what is

ⁱ *sTong-pa nyid*.

ⁱⁱ *Ma-rig-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *rang bzhing gyis stong pa nyid*.

^{iv} *Rang-stong-pa*.

not conditioned by thought and thus go beyond *samsara*. (It must be remarked that the Swatantrika subschools incorporated teachings belonging to the Third Promulgation and, in the case of the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Sautrantika, even some belonging to the Sautrantika school of the Hinayana; for details see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)

In the Third Promulgation, which took place in Mount Malaya (Sri Lanka), Bodha Gaya and Vaishali, Shakyamuni taught sutras that, rather than positing a self-existing, external material world and setting to discuss the nature of that world, emphasized the practice of *yoga* and all that had to do with mind and experience. As shown in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, these sutras, rather than outlining a merely intellectual theory of reality, based themselves on Shakyamuni's Awakening and yogic experience in order to provide a sound basis for effective yogic practice. This is why, generally speaking, Tibetan Schools that stress learning, scholarship and dialectics over and above yogic practice, such as for example the Gelugpaⁱ, regard the canonical texts of this Promulgation as having provisional meaning (Skt., *neyartha*; Tib., drangdön) and those of the Second Promulgation as having definitive meaning (Skt., *nitārtha*; Tib., ngedönⁱⁱ), whereas the Schools that emphasize yogic practice over and above learning, scholarship and dialectics, such as the Nyingmapaⁱⁱⁱ, regard them as having definitive meaning and those of the Second Promulgation as having provisional meaning.⁵³ (However, in each of the three Promulgations, some sutras contain teachings of a more “inner” character, whereas others emphasize teachings of a more “outer” character.⁵⁴)

The commentators and authors of secondary literature based on the sutras of the Third Promulgation, such as Maitreyanatha (whom tradition confuses with the Buddha of the future, Maitreya),⁵⁵ his great disciple, Asanga, and Asanga's brother, Vasubandhu,⁵⁶ produced various categories of interpretation. The lower ones gave rise to the *Yogachara* (“Behavior of Yoga”), *Chittamatra* (“Mind-Only”), *Vijñānavada* (“That adheres to consciousness”) or *Vijñaptimatra* (“Representation Only”) School, which asserted that all was mind or experiencing and rejected the existence of a physical world, and which deemed the phenomena of human experience to be illusory in the sense of being merely representation or information (*vijñaptimatra*), and in the sense of being dependent—their dependence lying on the fact that they are conditioned by other factors.^{iv}

The higher interpretations of the *Mahayana* Sutras by both the above interpreters of the texts of the Third Promulgation and by the Masters who produced and developed the Madhyamaka School, gave rise to the subtle, inner *Madhyamaka*, which includes the subschools known as Uma Zhentongpa^v and *Total Madhyamaka* or *Mahamadhyamaka*, the latter of which is the peak of all Buddhist philosophical schools. According to *Mahamadhyamaka* (and in general to the subtle, inner *Madhyamaka*), phenomenal existence in its totality is utterly unconditioned, but our experience of it is conditioned by our deluded thoughts, which we confuse with that which they interpret, so that we come to live in the wholly conditioned sphere known as *samsara* or “the wheel”, which

ⁱ *dGe-lugs-pa*.

ⁱⁱ *Nges-don*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *rNying-ma-pa*.

^{iv} For a discussion of the view of the *Yogachara* School in relation to those of the other schools of the *Sutrayana* Path of renunciation, and of the relation of the said views to those of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* (and to some extent to the Tantras), see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

^v *dbUma gZhan-stong-pa*.

involves recurrent ascension into less unpleasant conditioned states and descent into more painful ones—all of which, however, are characterized by lack of plenitude and suffering.

The Chinese *Mahayana*

In China and the Far East, the number of *Mahayana* schools became much greater than in India, each of them having its own version of the successive Promulgations of teachings by Shakyamuni, and/or of the different categories into which the Buddhist canonical texts should be classified.

In the previous section we saw that the two Indian schools of the *Mahayana* were the *Madhyamaka* and the *Yogachara*. Each of these had a scion in China, which later on became established in Korea and Japan: the *San-lun-tsun* or “Three Treatises” School,⁵⁷ which in Japan was called *Sanron*,⁵⁸ gave continuity to the *Madhyamaka* in the Far East, whereas the *Fa-hsiang* School, whose prestige diminished after the T’ang dynasty,⁵⁹ and which in Japan was called *Hosso*, gave continuity to the *Yogachara*. However, Chinese scholars classify both these schools as *quasi-Mahayana*, and most of the schools that they regard as fully *Mahayana* have been considered by Western scholars to be indigenous of China insofar as no solid proof of their existence in India has been found so far: *Ch’an* (Japanese, *Zen*, which is the only one of these schools for whose existence in India there is some, though scant, evidence), *Hua-yen* (Japanese, *Kegon*), *T’ien-t’ai* (Japanese, *Tendai*), *Ching-t’u-tsung* or Pure Land (Japanese, *Jodo-shu*), *Nirvana*, *Tripitaka*, *Vinaya*, etc.⁶⁰

The Chinese *Tripitaka* School, which developed into a self-appointed custodian of “orthodoxy,” was based on the teachings of the *Sutrayana* Path of renunciation contained in the Indian “Triple basket” or *Tripitaka* (the collection of Buddhist canonical teachings originating directly from Shakyamuni, which will be explained in a subsequent chapter), as well as on the commentaries by Chinese Masters, which, along with the former, were included in the Chinese *Tripitaka*.⁶¹

The Chinese *Vinaya* School was based specifically on the *Vinayapitaka*’s teachings on discipline, morality and behavior. The *Vinayapitaka*, insofar as it provides inflexible rules of behavior, is to be viewed as an inherently *Hinayana* section of the *Tripitaka*; however, some of those Chinese who, as remarked above, consider the *San-lun-tsun* and the *Fa-hsiang* to be *quasi-Mahayana*, paradoxically regard this school as a fully fledged *Mahayana* school.⁶²

The *Ch’an* or *Zen* School transmits the sudden Path of the *Mahayana*, which, in the case of individuals who have the appropriate capacity, is more rapid and efficient than the gradual Path of the same vehicle. This school will be reviewed in some detail in the chapter dealing with the various vehicles making up the Path of renunciation of the *Sutrayana*.

The *Nirvana* School, based on interpretations of the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* often accused of conceiving the absolute in personal or substantialistic terms,⁶³ admitted the concept of sudden Awakening. In particular, Master Tao-sheng placed a strong emphasis on the fact that, according to this *sutra*, sudden Awakening was possible even for the *icchantika*,⁶⁴ who are those who have cut all wholesome roots in themselves.

ⁱ See Takakuso, Junijiro, Edited by: Wing-tsit Chan and Charles A. Moore, 1947

The *T'ien-t'ai* School, or School of the Heavenly Dais, which also admitted the validity both of the swift method (which it attributed to the *Buddhavatamsaka Sutra*) and of the gradual one (which it attributed to the *Agama*, the *Vaipulyasutra* and the *Prajñāparamitasutra*), and which placed a great emphasis on the meditation practices of *shamatha* and *vipashyana*,⁶⁵ was based mainly on the Lotus or *Saddharmapundarika Sutra*, the *Mahashamathavipashyanasutra* (Chinese: *Mo-he chih-kuan*) and a couple of Chinese commentaries.

The *Hua-yen* School was based on the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and the rest of the *Vaipulyasutra* (which include the *Gandavyuha*) and, insofar as it contained the totality of the gradual teachings of the *Mahayana* together with those of the sudden *Mahayana* transmitted by the *Ch'an* or *Zen* school, which it combined skillfully, it designated its own combination of views and practices as the “round” or “total” method.

The *Ching-t'u* or Pure Land School had its roots in the *Sukhavativyuha*, *Amitabha* and *Amitayurdhyana* sutras. Although it represented itself as providing methods for achieving rebirth in the Pure Land of *Amitabha* (which would lead us to view it in the best of cases as a gradual School), D. T. Suzuki affirmed that in Japan a greater number of individuals attained a sudden, first instance of *satori* (Awakening) by means of the practices of this school than through those of *Ch'an* or *Zen*.⁶⁶

To conclude this brief review of the non-Tantric schools of the Far East, it must be noted that, in the thirteenth century CE, in Japan, there arose a sect (which later on became a group of sects) based on the *Lotus Sutra*, which bears the name of its founder, Nichiren (1222-1282).⁶⁷

The Chinese *Mahayana* does not divide Shakyamuni's teachings in terms of the three Promulgations listed in the preceding section, but in terms of a series of other, different criteria. Both the *T'ien-t'ai* and the *Hua-yen* schools distinguished five different categories of teachings directly transmitted by the Buddha Shakyamuni in his physical form, though the five categories listed by each of these schools diverge. In fact, the *T'ien-t'ai* School claimed that each category corresponded to a diverse period in Shakyamuni's teaching,⁶⁸ whereas the *Hua-yen* School did not so strictly relate each category to a given period of the Buddha's activity.⁶⁹ The *San-lun* School distinguished three categories of teachings, each of which corresponded to a given period in Shakyamuni's teaching.⁷⁰ The *Nirvana* School also classified the canonical teachings in terms of periods, but posited as the last one that in which the *Mahaparinirvanasutra* was taught, as this is the *sutra* that they deem to be supreme. Other schools of the Chinese *Mahayana* also made their own distinctions based on periods of teaching.

With the passing of time, the majority of Chinese Buddhist schools degenerated and serious practice was replaced by mere speculation. Exceptions to this tendency could be found in the Tibetan traditions in China, which were renewed every now and then by important Masters (as was done, for example, in the twentieth century by the great Kagyüpaⁱ Mahamudra and Dzogchen Master, Gangkar Rinpoche), and in *Ch'an* or *Zen*, which, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century and until more than halfway through the twentieth century, experienced a splendid revival thanks to the work of the extraordinary patriarch Hsu-yun.

ⁱ *bKa'-brgyud-pa*.

GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE MAHAYANA IN ITS TOTALITY

In the opinion of this author, the simplest classification of the *Mahayana* in its totality is as follows:

(1) Gradual, which in Indian Buddhism manifested as the two main schools mentioned above: *Yogachara* and *Madhyamaka*. The gradual *Mahayana* in general is based on the progressive development of *bodhichitta* or “Mind of Awakening” by means of the practice of the *bodhichitta* of intention—which includes the training of the “Four Immeasurable Catalysts of Awakening”—and the *bodhichitta* of action—which consists of training in the Six or Ten Paramitas. In this approach, which places a strong emphasis on training in the practice of *shamatha* or “mental pacification” and successively *vipashyana* or “insight” (the latter always associated with the movements of mind), realization as such consists in the manifestation of absolute wisdom (absolute *prajña*), which should be inseparable from compassion, and which the Uma Rangtongpaⁱ Schools explain as the realization of voidness of self-nature or substance (*swabhava shunyata*).

(2) Sudden (*Ch’an* or *Zen*), which does *not* try to *produce* the qualities of realization by means of imitative methods and gradual trainings, but resorts to skillful means aimed at facilitating the spontaneous, sudden unveiling of absolute wisdom (*prajña*),⁷¹ which according to this system involves the simultaneous manifestation of *shamatha* and *vipashyana* (considered to be inseparable in the practice of meditation proper to this school), and which naturally and effortlessly gives rise to all of the qualities of the *Mahayana*.

(3) Eclectic, including Chinese *Mahayana* schools such as, for example, *Hua-yen* and *T’ien-t’ai*, which combine the teachings and methods of gradual *Mahayana* with those of sudden *Mahayana*. Presently these schools may be considered to be extinct, insofar as, to a very great extent, they have lost their essence.

MAHAYANA VERSION OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

In *Mahayana* terms, the Four Truths may be explained as follows:

(1) Life is *dukkha*: lack of plenitude, dissatisfaction, discomfort, frustration and recurrent pain and suffering. In the explanation of *dukkha* there is no significant difference between the *Hinayana* or “Narrow Vehicle” and the *Mahayana* or “Wider Vehicle.” However, in the *Hinayana* the principal motivation to practice is to free oneself from *dukkha*; contrariwise, in the *Mahayana* we must aspire to an active wisdom allowing us to help all beings liberate themselves from *dukkha*.

(2) We have seen that, according to the original version of the Four Noble Truths, the cause of *dukkha* is *trishna*: a basic craving that recurrently manifests as a thirst for pleasure, which always involves both the impulse to confirm ourselves as substantial individuals and the longing to fill a basic existential lack, and which in the case of some individuals on the Path may manifest as thirst for extinction.⁷² Upon considering the Four Noble Truths, some representatives of the *Mahayana* stressed the fact that the *trishna* or

ⁱ dbUma Rang-stong-pa; Skt., *Swabhava-Shunyata Madhyamaka*.

craving that, according to the *Hinayana*, was the Second Truth, in its turn had a cause, which was *avidya* (Tib., marigpa⁷³): the basic delusion⁷⁴ that consists in being unaware of the true, single nature of all subjects and objects, and taking each of them to be a self-existing, substantial entity, so that what is dependent is taken to be independent, what is void is taken to be self-existent, what is insubstantial is taken to be substantial, the relative is taken to be absolute, the unsatisfactory to have the potential of providing satisfaction, and so on. This view was in agreement with the order of the renowned “twelve links (*nidana*) of interdependent origination” that constitute the *pratitya samutpada*, for the first of the twelve links is *avidya*, *trishna* being the eighth and, as such, being a consequence of *avidya*.⁷⁵

In order to get a better grasp of the reason why, for the above representatives of the *Mahayana*, the Second Truth was not *trishna*, but *avidya*, it must be noted that the single nature of all entities, including subjects and objects, is an undivided continuum that may be characterized in terms of completeness and plenitude (it does not matter whether we conceive this continuum as a physical universe and interpret it in terms of present day theories in physics,⁷⁶ whether we imagine the whole of reality as a continuum of “mental stuff,” or whether we refuse to interpret it one way or the other). The very moment we feel that we are entities inherently separate from an “external dimension,” the absolute completeness and plenitude of the undivided continuum is disrupted *in* and *by* our experience,⁷⁷ as a result of which our consciousness experiences a *lack of completeness and plenitude*: this *sensation of lack* is precisely the root of the basic craving or thirst that *trishna* is.⁷⁸

(3) The *nirvana* that, according to the original teaching, is the Third Truth, can no longer be conceived as a mere cessation of suffering, for in the *Mahayana* one first seeks and then obtains an active wisdom that, *besides* putting an end to *avidya* (marigpa) and therefore to *duhkha* in the individual, allows him or her to help all beings achieve Awakening or freedom from suffering. This aim of the *Mahayana* is called *anuttara samyak sambodhi* or “Total Unsurpassable Awakening.”

(4) There is a Path leading to the achievement of the Third Truth, and therefore to the surpassing of the first two Truths. Both the Buddhism of First Promulgation (the *Hinayana*) and the *Mahayana* explain this truth in terms of the “Noble Eightfold Path,” which consists of right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. However, since there is a big difference between the different Buddhist vehicles in what regards the manner of treading the Path, in this book I will explain the Fourth Noble Truth in terms of three Paths and nine Vehicles established in Tibet during the Ancient or Nyingma dissemination of Buddhism.

It must be emphasized that, no matter to what extent the teaching on the Four Noble Truths may be successfully adapted to the views and realizations proper to so-called higher vehicles,⁷⁹ it is a characteristically *Hinayana* teaching, designed to appeal to individuals who can understand suffering and all that pertains to the level of body, and who will naturally wish to rid themselves of suffering, but who might not understand or respond enthusiastically to “higher” forms of Buddhism: they may be afraid of voidness as taught in the *Mahayana* and be reluctant to face dangers and hardships to help others free themselves from suffering—and, even more so, they may be unable to understand the level of energy that is the essence of the *Vajrayana* and the level of mind that is the

essence of what in this context I will refer to by the nontraditional term *Atiyana*ⁱ (these Buddhist Vehicles and levels of the human reality will be explained later on).

ⁱ As we have seen, this is my abbreviation for *Atiyogatantrayana*.

MAHAYANA VERSION OF THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH

We have seen that the first noble truth was *dukkha*: the lack of completeness or plenitude arising from the illusory sundering of the continuum of plenitude that is our true nature (which takes place when we come to feel different and separate from an external dimension), and, in general, the dissatisfaction, discomfort, frustration and recurrent pain and suffering inherent in deluded existence. However, most of the time “normal” individuals (as different from sane individuals) succeed in eluding this *dukkha*, insofar as normality involves, and depends upon, psychological mechanisms allowing human beings to elude *dukkha* in an effective way and in general to deceive themselves. In fact, throughout our lives, again and again we divert attention from the illusory lack at the core of *dukkha*, focusing it on countless hopes, projects, illusions and so on.

In order not to despair in face of the ineluctable presence of the sensation of lack inherent in our apparently separate existence, and thus to be able to keep going with our lives even though our experience is marked by *dukkha* (lack of plenitude, dissatisfaction and suffering), whenever we become aware of the lack we imagine that it is due to our needing this or that, and convince ourselves that obtaining what we think we need will fill it. For example, we may come to believe that we need a certain object, and that the possession of the object will fill the lack. Consequently, we dismiss the sensation, thinking that it is transitory and that it will come to an end when we achieve our aim, and so long as we strive to obtain the money to acquire the object, or to obtain it by other means, we succeed in eluding the sensation of lack a good deal of the time. When we do obtain the object we had been striving to obtain, its possession may intoxicate us for a few hours or perhaps even for brief periods during a few days (for example, if I buy the latest model dream car, I can become momentarily inebriated by its new car smell, its beauty, its smoothness and its power, or by thinking that everybody is looking at me in such a marvelous piece of machinery), but immediately afterwards, we are forced once again to face the sensation of lack. Then, when the unwanted sensation slips into our conscious awareness, we will no longer be able to elude it by concentrating on the means to obtain the object, as we already own it, nor will we be able to deceive ourselves thinking that its possession will fill the lack. Thus we will have no choice but to invent a new object to obtain, and to deceive ourselves by denying what experience has taught us:⁸⁰ that the possession of no object whatsoever will possibly fill the lack.

A very clear example of the above is that of children who have been excited for weeks by the expectation receiving gifts on Christmas day; when the day comes and they receive their new toys they will play with them, but immediately thereafter they will feel void, as enjoyment of the gifts fails to provide them with real fulfillment and satisfaction,

and now they have no expectations to get excited about. Furthermore, if the children get many expensive gifts, it may be worse than if they receive few inexpensive ones, for in the latter case they may believe that their disappointment is due to the fact that the gifts were few and cheap, but in the former one, they may begin to intuit that gifts, toys and possessions cannot produce true satisfaction.

It is to the extent that we believe that possession or enjoyment of certain objects will allow us to recover the plenitude we have lost, that we project greater or lesser value on those objects.⁸¹ And, as we have just seen, in many cases the value of these objects is also intimately linked to the value that, according to our belief, its possession will bestow on us in the eyes of others. However, believing that the possession of something will result in an experience of plenitude could hardly be less in line with reality. Since the sensation of lack derives from the illusion that we are separate from the plenitude of the universe, and since the possession of physical objects confirms and maintains the illusion that we are distinct and separate from what we possess (as well as from the rest of the “physical world”), possessing objects can only confirm and reinforce the sensation of lack.

Furthermore, so long as we are in *samsara*, whatever we possess will become a source of worry and strife. This is the reason why Petrül Rinpocheⁱ said, “if you have a packet of tea, you have a problem the size of a packet of tea; if you have a goat, you have a problem the size of a goat; if you have a horse, you have a problem the size of a horse.” If you have no car, you do not have to worry about a car; if you have an old car, you have that much to worry about; if you have a new, very expensive car, you have a far greater source of worry. If you have many stock exchange shares, you have a *really great* source of worry.

Another strategy we resort to in order to try to fill our sensation of lack, consists in attempting to get others to project a high degree of value on us in order to fill with this value the lack that results from the illusory sundering of completeness and plenitude produced by our illusion of separateness. One of the means that we use to try to get others to value us consists in adapting ourselves to our society or social group and embodying the values shared by their members, so that the value that they have placed on those values will be projected on us. Nevertheless, we will never be able to get all of those whose opinions we mind, to continually hold us in high esteem—or, even less so, to admire us so much as to see us as value itself. Furthermore, the more we come to depend on the recognition of others, the more anxiety we will endure facing the possibility of being ignored, rejected, slighted, judged negatively or hated.⁸²

The desire to be valued is also at the root of falling in love: unless we are sadists or masochists,⁸³ we want to be the most valuable and important person for someone else, in the belief that the value and the importance that the person projects onto us will fill our lack. Of course, in order to believe this, we on our part will have to become infatuated with that person, projecting on her or him a high value, for otherwise we would not be able to take seriously the value that she or he may project onto us (since stupid, mad or ignorant people may be mistaken, the value that they project onto us will not be worth anything; on the other hand, the value that someone who is not mistaken and who is worth a lot, surely “will really be worth a lot”).⁸⁴ Thus, “normal” lovers want their partner to value them over everything else, and if they value their partner, this is owing in

ⁱ *dPal-sprul Rin-po-che (Dza dPal-sprul 'Jigs-med Chos-kyi dBang-po Rin-po-che).*

great part to that being a necessary condition for them being able to value the valuation they receive from the partner. To the extent that this is so, what both lovers value is first of all their own self, and each of them incurs in self-deceit when he or she thinks that his or her partner values him or her more than anything.

However, all this is not something that we calculate and plan, for otherwise the strategy would not work, as we would be aware that our potential partner is not so special after all and that our real aim is to fill our lack with the value projected by her or him. Something difficult to express will attract us to our partner,⁸⁵ and this attraction will serve as the basis for us to deceive ourselves and thereby become convinced that she or he is sufficiently special. This attraction will unleash a series of reactions in our organism, including the production of endorphins that will “dope” us, causing us to experience a special feeling—which we will take as proof of the uniqueness and specialty of the other person. The effect of endorphins is so powerful as to allow lovers embraced under the rain not to feel cold or experience discomfort. However, this does not last long; it has been determined that the extraordinary production of endorphins associated with falling in love does not last, in the best of cases, over three years. Besides, just as happened to the evil witch in Snow White’s story, infatuation will have made us dependent on the magic mirror that tells us we are the most special person. Consequently, instead of obtaining security, we thus give rise to a continual anxiety as to whether or not we are still the most valuable and precious person for our partner, and as to whether she or he has come to value someone else more than our selves. And since there is no way for us to explore the depths of another human being’s consciousness, we will never be able to be sure we are truly the most important, most special and most valuable for her or him. It is due to all this, and to many other things that we do not have space to consider here, that the project of filling the basic existential lack issuing from delusion by falling in love and getting the other to fall in love with us is doomed to failure.⁸⁶

The search for fame can be a way of trying to achieve what falling in love could not give us, through multiplying the sources of valorization of one’s individuality. It happens that, according to the perception of those pursuing fame, if *many* people esteem them, they will be more valuable than if only one appreciates them, for they believe that they will thus be able to incorporate into themselves the sum of the value that each of their admirers project. Moreover, even the most common and least special people can get someone to esteem them in a special way and become their partner, but fame can only be obtained if one is *very* special in some sense or in some activity—and, moreover, one may think that it is less likely that many people will be mistaken than a single person. Another apparent benefit of fame lies in not being dependent on the value and image projected by one single person, whom then one has to value especially: if one depends on *many* magic mirrors, it will not matter so much what *one* of them reflects. However, just as in the preceding instances, this self-deception, instead of putting an end to the lack, will cause it to increase: in this case, it will increase proportionally to the number of people with whose admiration we will try to fill it. Moreover, as individuals become accustomed to fame, it loses its power to cause them to deflect their attention from their illusory inner vacuum (which, as we have seen, has not been overcome, but, contrariwise, has been made to increase); therefore, they need their fame to continue to grow without ever reaching a ceiling. Furthermore, they become more and more addicted to the recognition received from others: we have all seen some celebrity arrive at a public place

showing signs of being worried about whether or not he or she is being recognized by those present.⁸⁷ And when negative sides of famous people are made public, they often suffer a nervous breakdown (as happened to Elizabeth Taylor as a result of the publication of the book written by journalist Kitty Kelly after passing herself off as a household assistant in her home). Fame, let us repeat, is a whirlpool that increases our inner vacuum, to the extent that, in order to fill it, we need the value projected by an ever greater number of people: it is clear that, the greater quantity of something we need to fill a hole, the bigger the hole that we were trying to fill will have become.

The same happens with our association with individuals valued by many, with belonging to groups that many value, and so on. To the extent that we think these things will endow us with value in the eyes of others (whom we value insofar as they value the same individuals, groups, etc., as we do), we value and pursue them. Nevertheless, they will not provide us with stable value and happiness, for, among other things: (1) Not all human beings value the same objects, individuals and groups, so that, in order to be valued by some, we will have to be despised by others.⁸⁸ (2) As will be shown later on, pleasure is the result of acceptance, which is interdependent with rejection and cannot be sustained indefinitely; once we become accustomed to the positive estimation of the human entity designated by our name, habituation will cause us to stop accepting this object, and so we will become indifferent towards it—which will produce a neutral feeling that later we will interpret as boredom and consequently we will reject, experiencing the displeasure that results from rejection. Thus, we will migrate through the six psychological realms of the cycle of indifference, rejection and acceptance that Buddhists call *samsara*. (3) At each instant we will feel threatened by the possibility of losing what we have become attached to, and our attachments will thus become a source of anxiety and anguish. And so on.

Furthermore, if we cling to our being Christians, Jews, atheists or Buddhists, we will always be worried about what people may think of Jesus and the Christians, of Jews, of atheists, or of Buddha and the Buddhists—and when those with whom we identify are insulted, we will get offended and suffer, and we might even be willing to fight and thus run the risk of suffering blows, pain, bruises, wounds and even death (or to cause any of these damages to our opponent). However, if we defeat our adversary we will remain dissatisfied as well, since we will never be able to convince him that we are right, and he will keep on having a negative opinion of Christians, Jews, atheists or Buddhists. This dynamic is at the root of conflicts between groups, and in particular of wars—which, given the characteristics and number of present weapons, in the best of cases produce a drastic acceleration of the process of self destruction of humanity and, in the worst of cases, might cause the immediate destruction of life on our planet. Thus Krishnamurti was right when he asserted that, so long as we are this or that (which, as will be shown in the next chapter, in the context of this book means “so long as we delusorily value our being this or that”), we are responsible for wars and for confrontations between groups, with all their negative consequences—which nowadays may even involve global destruction.⁸⁹

As we have seen, it is quite common to try to fill our lack by trying to get others to appreciate us, engaging in the dialectics of the lover and the beloved described by Sartre;ⁱ however, others in whom anger predominates over desire, or who are convinced

ⁱ Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition 1980.

they cannot get others to appreciate them, and who in general are rougher and cruder, try to do so by means of the Hegelian dialectics of the master and the slave,ⁱ or through sadomasochism in the Sartrean sense of the term,ⁱⁱ attempting to dominate and subject others to their power, to get them to fear them, to fawn on them, and so on. Those who fail to get others to admire and love them, often try to prove their worth by getting the better of those others. More generally, an ubiquitous strategy for trying to fill the essential lack that is the motor of *samsara* lies in trying to obtain a position of power allowing us to feel privileged in relation to others and to use our privileged status as proof of our pretended happiness and comfort—and, more basically, of our supposedly inherent value. However, those who set to prevail over others through coarse or subtle aggression will spend their lives struggling against others to keep their position or conquer a higher one, and since rejection begets pain, whoever takes this path is doomed to experience again and again the hell inherent in the bare experience of aversion (of which pride is a transformation).⁹⁰

Pleasure is another of the privileged means through which we try to fill our lack; since all of us value whatever we believe will fill this lack, and since all of us find pleasure specially rewarding, all of us value it quite highly. Pleasure can be classified into sensual-Dionysian,⁹¹ aesthetic-Apollonian,⁹² and transpersonal-Brahmic⁹³ (the latter of which is said to be “of a purely mental kind”), which the common Buddhist teachings and the Tantric Buddhist teachings grade in opposite ways, and which common individuals grade according to their respective conditionings and propensities.⁹⁴ However, no matter to which of the preceding three categories our favorite pleasures belong, all of us value the objects, persons or activities on which we depend for obtaining pleasure just as highly as we value the latter.

The first of the above three kinds of pleasure is easiest to explain because, while we experience it, the object of consciousness is the sensation of pleasure itself. As the Stoics asserted, pain results from rejecting sensations, rather than from the quality or intensity of those sensations; pleasure results from our acceptance of sensations, rather than from the latter’s quality or intensity; and neutral sensations result from indifference toward sensations. Sensations that go beyond certain levels of intensity (quantity) and/or that exhibit certain characteristics (quality) are indicative of either damage or danger to the organism, and hence we have an inborn tendency to reject them, as a result of which we experience them as unpleasant or altogether painful. Sensations within certain ranges of intensity and/or exhibiting certain qualities are indicative of benefit to the organism and/or respond to activities necessary for the survival of the species, and therefore we have an innate tendency to accept them, as a result of which we experience them as pleasurable. And sensations below a given threshold of intensity and/or exhibiting certain qualities are neither harmful nor necessary or beneficial, and therefore we have a natural tendency to remain indifferent to them—as a result of which we experience them as neutral. However, it must be borne in mind that even though we have a natural tendency to accept some kinds of sensations, reject other types and remain indifferent to still other types, *in themselves* none of these sensations is unpleasant, pleasant or neutral: what makes them be unpleasant, pleasant or neutral is our rejection, acceptance or indifference, respectively.

ⁱ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, this English ed. 1955, trans. James Baille.

ⁱⁱ Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition 1980.

Since the acceptance of sensations cannot be sustained uninterruptedly, there is no way pleasure may be sustained uninterruptedly. If we are caressed with a goose feather, we will experience pleasure; however, if the caresses continue without interruption for long hours and entire days and nights, they will turn into an unbearable torture: for as long as we accept it, the sensation produced by the feather will be pleasurable, but the very instant we begin to reject it, our rejection will make it unpleasant—and, to the extent that our rejection tends to increase as time passes without the caresses stopping, the sensation will become ever more painful and unbearable. Thus it is clear that it is not only the quality or the intensity of the sensation that makes it pleasant or unpleasant; the decisive factor that causes it to be one way or the other is whether the mental subject accepts it or rejects it.⁹⁵ Otherwise, how would it be possible for the masochist (in the common, nonSartrean sense) to enjoy what other human beings would experience as pain and would want to shun?⁹⁶

Since there is no way that our acceptance may be sustained uninterruptedly, it is clear that sensual pleasures are ephemeral. Furthermore, most of them are not so intense as to absorb us completely, altogether making us forget our sensation of lack. Some of us intuitively believe that erotic pleasure could be sufficiently intense as to put an end our lack—and indeed in one of the Buddhist Paths that will be discussed below a sustained experience of the most intense erotic pleasure possible is used as the means to put an end to the illusion of separateness and the feeling of lack inherent in it. However, this is not what happens when erotic relations are undertaken outside the context of yogic practice. The first contact with the other person (for example, holding hands) is pleasurable, but not intense enough as to dissolve our basic sensation of lack, or even as to absorb our attention uninterruptedly over a long period. Therefore, after the first contact we will try to intensify the pleasure derived from it through cumulative interaction:⁹⁷ since every new act by either of the parties produces a little more pleasure, but not enough to fill our lack, both parts undertake new acts that produce greater pleasure, engaging in ever-increasing activity. This goes together with an expectant attitude that keeps our attention oriented toward the future, while the *now* eludes us at each instant. Therefore, when we finally reach the instant of maximum pleasure in the ephemeral moment of climax,⁹⁸ we are so oriented toward the future and so distanced from the *now* that an insurmountable abyss separates us from the bare, full experience of this pleasure. In fact, as we grasp the ensuing pleasure, which hardly ever reaches the intensity we dreamed of, it escapes us like sand from our grip. Therefore, immediately thereafter we have to face our lack, but then it may happen that we no longer succeed in believing that it will be filled by the pleasure that normally arises from intercourse. If both partners manage to believe it will, and the male has the energy to undertake another coitus, it will likely be less satisfactory to the partners than the preceding one, for having accustomed themselves to the degrees of pleasure they experienced a while ago, they will be satisfied by those same degrees of pleasure to an even lesser extent. If the couple has enough money, possibly they might try to evade their disappointment and attempt to fill their lack by eating out; otherwise, they could go to the movies or tune on the TV—or simply seek forgetfulness in sleep.⁹⁹ It was due to repeated experience of this dynamic that Saint Augustine said that after coitus all animals are sorrowful.

The point is that plenitude can only be experienced in the undivided completeness of our true condition, in which the continuum of Space-Time-Awareness is uninterrupted,

for there is no illusory subject to feel at a distance from its objects, and the *now* is not divided into past, present and future. However, the moment there arises the subject-object duality, the undivided completeness of our true condition is illusorily sundered, and the subject is doomed to experience the lack of the plenitude of completeness. As we will see in the next chapter, thus arises the *present* (the etymological meaning of which is “being before”), for the illusory mental subject experiences itself as *being at a distance* from the undivided *now*. If then we seek a climax of pleasure, pursuing a future, we assert and confirm the illusion of being at a distance from the *now*, thus sustaining our illusion of distance from the physical universe and thus from the plenitude of undivided totality—which maintains our lack of plenitude.

The case of aesthetic and transpersonal pleasure is different from that of sensual pleasure, for while we experience it the direct object of experience is not sensation itself: in the case of aesthetic pleasure, the object of experience is a form, and in the case of the transpersonal pleasure associated with samsaric formless contemplations, the object of experience seems to be a formless infinitude.¹⁰⁰ Since consciousness can neither have two objects nor adopt two different attitudes at the same time, when we have an object and accept it, this attitude extends itself to all potential objects, and thus automatically we accept the whole of the continuum out of which we single out all of our objects; since this continuum includes our sensations, automatically we accept the latter also—and, as we have seen, the acceptance of sensation causes us to experience it as pleasant. Likewise, when we reject our object, we automatically reject the continuum out of which we single out our objects and thus automatically reject our sensations—and, as we have seen, the rejection of sensation causes us to experience it as unpleasant. Finally, when we remain indifferent to our object, we automatically remain indifferent to the continuum of potential objects, thereby remaining indifferent to our sensations—and, as we have seen, indifference to sensation causes us to experience sensation as neutral.

Let us take as an example of aesthetic pleasure the contemplation of a work of art we really like. When we *admire* and therefore accept the object, we are accepting the totality of our experience, which includes the mental factor or mental event (*chaitasika* or *semjung*ⁱ) that the Buddhist *Abhidharma* calls *feeling-tone* (Skt., *vedana*; Tib., *tsorwa*ⁱⁱ): the so-called “mental” sensation that appears more pronouncedly in the center of the body at the level of the heart.¹⁰¹ Since “pleasant” sensations are *sensations accepted by consciousness*, the acceptance of the “mental” sensations that takes place when we accept the object will cause us to experience a pleasurable *feeling-tone*, which we will interpret as irrefutable proof of the inherent (rather than culturally conditioned) beauty of the object. However, if we are forced to contemplate the same object indefinitely, at some point we will tire of the monotony of the situation, and thus we will subtly reject the object, experiencing a subtle discomfort that we will understand as boredom: at this point we will be unable to appreciate the object’s beauty, and we will find that the work of art has become a nuisance. (For a more detailed discussion of this, see my book *Estética primordial y arte visionario*.ⁱⁱⁱ) The same that applies to aesthetic appreciation will apply to the godly sphere of form (*rupadhatu* or *rupa loka*), though in this case the ensuing

ⁱ *Sems-byung*.

ⁱⁱ *Tshor-ba*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Capriles, Elías, 2000b, and upcoming revised and enlarged edition.

discomfort will be far more pronounced—which one of the reasons why the dynamic of this sphere is a key catalyst of the most advanced Dzogchen practices.¹⁰²

In the case of the contemplation of space in formless (*arupa*) meditation (as well as in any other of the four contemplations of the formless sphere), we *might* come to accept our object insofar as its limitlessness causes us to perceive it as somehow being magnificent and sublime.¹⁰³ As explained above, when we accept the object, automatically we accept the so-called “mental” sensation that appears more pronouncedly in the center of the body at the level of the heart, thereby experiencing pleasure. Furthermore, one of the causes of our acceptance and the ensuing pleasure will be our *identification* with the limitlessness of the object, which will cause us to believe we are magnificent and sublime and take pride in it, as well as in our ability to experience our own limitless, magnificent and sublime condition, and so on. However, as we will see later on, the *karma* that we have developed, and that allows us to maintain the meditation, sooner or later will get exhausted, or the contributory conditions necessary for us to maintain the acceptance of our object without interruption will change—for example, we may tire of the relative monotony of the object and reject it, or we may face disturbing stimuli, etc. At any rate, also in this case, at some point our attitude toward the object will change, as a result of which the character of the experience will change, and we will fall from our “high.” (Since in this case the pleasurable experience has been produced by a concentration that results in a progressive relaxation of tension and increasing serenity, one might expect that this relaxation and serenity should prevent the manifestation of the drive to reject the object, or that it should mollify if it did come to manifest; however, once rejection arises, the very opposite is likely to happen: since we have become unaccustomed to discomfort, upon experiencing the discomfort issuing from rejection we will reject it with our whole being, giving rise to a positive feedback loop of rejection and suffering.)

Despite the fact that pleasant transpersonal-Brahmic states, being conditioned and transient, pertain to *samsara*, and despite the fact that a number of deluded beings try to fill their basic sensation of lack with the subtle pleasure such states provide, in a subsequent chapter we will see that transpersonal psychology wrongly identifies sanity with the attainment of transpersonal states in general, failing to distinguish between: (1) the transpersonal-Brahmic conditioned states located at the top of the wheel of *samsara*; (2) the transpersonal condition known as dimension of the base-of-all, in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active; and (3) the liberation and the Awakening which are the aims of Buddhism and other genuine, nondual mystical traditions. Therefore, those who wrongly take this and related trends of Western psychology to be a genuine spiritual Path become unable to follow the only Path leading to Awakening or liberation, which consists in Seeing through originated, conditioned states into the uncompounded, unborn, unconditioned nature.

We have seen that pleasure is interdependent with pain and maintains itself only so long as consciousness can continue to accept its object, and we have seen that since we cannot uninterruptedly maintain acceptance, it is a rule that sooner or later pleasure will be replaced by pain. In fact, so long as we experience ourselves as subjects separate from our objects, we will be doomed to accept them, experiencing pleasure; reject them, experiencing pain; or remain indifferent toward them, experiencing a neutral sensation. Since these are the only three possibilities of an apparently separate consciousness, and

since it is impossible to maintain an attitude of acceptance uninterruptedly, each act of acceptance and therefore each pleasure will become the cause of a later rejection and therefore of a subsequent pain. Thus we are doomed to a self-sustaining alternation of pleasure, pain and neutral sensations, all of which manifest in a medium characterized by the underlying lack of plenitude that results from the illusion of being at a distance from the *now* and from the continuum of plenitude that the single, true condition of all entities is.

Furthermore, when we experience pain, we increase it by rejecting it and wanting to get rid of it, causing it to increase from its own feedback as will be shown below. Then, when we experience pleasure, we are unable to fully enjoy it, for our attempts to grasp it completely and enjoy it to its fullness, or to intensify it, and our fear that it will come to an end too soon, cause pleasure to be replaced by anxiety, worry and avidity, all of which distract us from the pleasure and obstruct the acceptance that is the cause of pleasure. In their turn, neutral sensations sooner or later will be interpreted as boredom and, consequently, rejected, causing them to cease to be neutral and become a nuisance.

Buddhism designates existence marked by the first two Noble Truths as *samsara* or “the wheel” (Tib., *khorwa*ⁱ): each ascent toward pride, glory or pleasure, even if it initially produces paradisaical experiences of sensuality, form or formlessness, will create the conditions for a later descent toward pain, shame or ignominy. And when we are forced to experience any of these latter experiences, for as long as they continue to manifest we will reject them with ever-increasing impetus, giving rise to a suffering that grows from its own feedback: to the degree that pain increases, our rejection of it increases, which makes our pain increase proportionally, which causes our rejection to increase... In fact, pain develops exponentially insofar as it involves a positive feedback loop that gives rise to an autocatalytic process.¹⁰⁴

A person enjoying high status is not “better off” than another suffering a low status; if a poverty-stricken person has a greater quantity of so-called “physical” sufferings, a wealthier person certainly has a great deal of so-called “mental” ones—and, moreover, at any moment he or she can have an accident or illness and thus be forced to experience so-called “physical” pain. Furthermore, if we ascend to a higher place because of apparently desirable turns of fortune, when the time comes for the wheel of *samsara* to turn we will experience a far more vertiginous and pronounced fall, since we will plunge from a higher point in the wheel, possibly to the lowest point. And when we face the states represented by the lower part of the wheel, being unaccustomed to them, we will reject them with greater impetus, which will make them ever more unpleasant. This is the reason why Blaise Pascal insisted that the existence of the peasant, for example, is less prone to conflict than that of the sovereign.ⁱⁱ

“The great and the small have the same accidents, the same sorrows and the same passions; however, the former is on the periphery of the wheel, whereas the latter is more near the center and thus is less agitated by the same movements.”

In his *Bodhicharyavatara* or *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*,¹⁰⁵ Shantideva explained the *duhkha* and suffering of *samsara* in terms of three types of suffering, which in *The*

ⁱ ‘*Khor-ba*.

ⁱⁱ Pascal, Blaise, posthumous edition, 1669; Spanish translation, 1977; thought 223.

Precious Vase: Instructions on the Base of Santi Maha Samgha, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu summarized as follows:ⁱ

...even though it may seem that at times in the karmic dimension of *samsara* there is fleeting happiness, in reality beings of the three lower states (the hell realm, the *preta* realm and the animal realm) are afflicted with the ‘suffering of suffering’ or ‘double suffering’, like a leper who is also struck by bubonic plague; the beings of the three higher states (the realm of gods, the realm of anti-gods and the human realm) are tormented by the ‘suffering of change’, like a bee [that previously was happily flying around but then is] trapped in a jar [thereby becoming very agitated]; and all beings dominated by a distorted perception of reality are subject to ‘all-pervading conditioning suffering’, transmigrating infinitely like the turning of the paddles of a water mill...

What Shantideva called “all-pervading conditioning suffering” is the relentless lack of plenitude resulting from the illusory sundering of our primordial completeness by the illusory subject-object cleavage—which, as we have seen, dooms the subject to experience the lack of completeness and plenitude that, as remarked in the above quote, affects “all beings dominated by a distorted perception of reality,” and therefore pervades all *samsaric* states of the three spheres (of formlessness, form and sensuality) and the six realms.¹⁰⁶ This lack of completeness and plenitude involves not only a longing for them, but unabated discomfort and uneasiness as well, for as soon as we feel separate from the continuum of plenitude that the single nature of all entities is and thus experience a lack of plenitude, the contrast to the preceding plenitude causes us to judge the lack to be undesirable and automatically reject it, thereby experiencing the discomfort that ensues from rejection. Thus, delusion implies not only the lack of plenitude and dissatisfaction that have been considered so far, but discomfort and uneasiness as well, which are essential aspects of what Shantideva called “all-pervading conditioning suffering”. (Of course, in those moments when we accept our objects, pleasure momentarily replaces discomfort, and when we cannot change discomfort into pleasure in this way, we try at least to ignore it by setting our attention on distracting aims, activities and so on.)

Thus, this “all-pervading conditioning suffering” is the essential feeling of lack and the discomfort and uneasiness that all beings in *samsara* constantly strive to elude by the means considered in this chapter (there are many others and an inventory would take countless pages). It is precisely because to some extent we succeed in eluding it by the means described, that Shantideva compared this type of suffering to a hair, the normal individual to the palm of a hand and the *bodhisattva* or individual *en route* to Awakening to the eyeball, and noted that in the palm of the hand the hair can remain undetected indefinitely, but that in the eyeball, where its presence becomes evident and unbearable, it has to be removed immediately. Normal individuals to some extent succeed in eluding this all-pervading feeling of lack, discomfort and uneasiness, and insofar as they succeed in doing so they have no chance whatsoever of getting rid of it. The *Mahayana* practitioner *en route* to Awakening, on the other hand (to some extent because she or he has understood the dynamic of elusion partly described in this chapter), has brought about a deficiency in those conditions that tend to produce and sustain birth and death, which makes it impossible for him or her to succeed in effectively eluding the feeling of lack,

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 42-43.

discomfort and uneasiness—and therefore only she or he has the opportunity to uproot the cause of that feeling, attaining Awakening.

In turn, the “suffering of change” is typical of higher realms, whose denizens to a considerable extent succeed in eluding the all pervasive suffering described above, but are subject to the suffering of change that occurs when they come to know that they are about to lose the favorable conditions represented by their psychological state, comfortable life, status and position. In particular, the gods of the peak of *samsara* existence completely succeed in eluding suffering until few days before their fall, when they are said to foresee their upcoming fall and the bad destiny that will follow thereafter, and therefore suffer bitterly anticipating what is to come—like a bee that, after being in boundless space, is to be confined to the claustrophobic dimension of a small jar. When they fall, they will have to face the “suffering of suffering” that is the third of the types of suffering listed by Shantideva.

Finally, this third type of suffering—the one called “suffering of suffering” or “double suffering”—is the suffering most people refer to by the term, which is characteristic of lower realms. Its example is a leper who is also struck by bubonic plague, which illustrates the pain of experiencing pain, illness, dejection, sadness, depression and so on that recurrently strikes beings who, being confined to *samsara*, already suffer from all-pervading suffering. Thus, in this case a misfortune falls on top of misfortune, resulting in a “double misfortune”.

Whether we are kings or beggars, good looking or ugly, healthy or sick, loved or repudiated by other people, what we do when we try to reach plenitude by the usual means is to maintain our lack of plenitude, put ourselves in the hands of others (as we cause our well-being to depend on their capricious judgments about us), and suffer constantly as we face the impossibility of obtaining the satisfaction we pursue. Since deep down we know perfectly well that we will never succeed in filling our lack with possessions, with the value projected by others, with “physical,” “aesthetic” or “mental” pleasure, and so on, we try at least to elude the lack, together with the disturbances that accompany it (which together make up the “all-pervasive suffering”), by undertaking activities that divert our attention from it (and from all three types of suffering, for that matter). Now, for these activities to absorb our attention, we will have to believe that we are pursuing the object of the activity rather than the activity itself. As Pascal points out, rather than having the hare’s meat, what hunters want is to run after the animal; however, in order to pursue it, they have to make themselves believe that what they want is to get the hare itself. Likewise, what gamblers really want is to forget the miseries of *samsara* by concentrating on the roulette (or the cards, etc.); however, in order to do so they have to make themselves believe that what they want is to win the main prize. And so on. (In fact, if you want to ruin the fun of a hunter, give him or her the hare and tell him or her to stay home; if you want to ruin the fun of a gambler, give him or her the main prize and tell him or her to keep away from the casino. And so on.)

By concentrating on the objects of our desire, our hatred, our envy or our pride, and by clinging to the habits allowing us to elude awareness of whatever disturbs us, we elude the fully conscious realization of the dissatisfaction, the frustration, the tension, the anxiety, the continuous missing the point and, in short, the suffering that is inherent in these disturbing emotions. Furthermore, since in order to go on with our normal lives we have to elude the fact that our existence is inherently dissatisfactory, we have

mechanisms allowing us to forget many of the unhappy memories of our past, and to privilege remembrance of our most pleasant moments. In the West, this has been widely recognized by psychologists, who have asserted that “pleasant experiences are remembered more easily than unpleasant ones.”¹⁰⁷

It is solely because of the psychological mechanisms that allow us to elude most of the undesirable consequences of delusion, to remember pleasant experiences and to forget a large part of the unpleasant ones experienced in the past, and so on, that in spite of the lack of plenitude and the dissatisfaction that characterizes all our experiences, and despite the recurrent pain and the repeated frustration that we have to face again and again, we succeed in going on with our projects, our activities and our lives.¹⁰⁸ As Pascal so rightly noted, peasants enthusiastically go to war in order to leave behind the miseries of their usual way of life; then, while facing the horrors of the battlefield, they idealize the peacefulness of their former existence, their families and family life, etc. However, once they are home again and back to their usual routine, after a while they will be willing to face once more the horrors of the battlefield in order to forget the misery of their lives.

The above mentioned psychological mechanisms—made possible by the relatively impermeable character of our conscious attention—keep us from becoming fully aware of the fact that our habitual condition involves lack of plenitude, dissatisfaction, uneasiness and discomfort that cannot be overcome so long as this condition persists, and from realizing that repeated frustration, reiterated pain and recurrent suffering are inherent in this condition. For that reason, in order to overcome delusion and the *duhkha* inherent to it, we must first of all realize that this *duhkha* pervades the totality of our experience. In fact, in order to escape from jail, first of all we will have to realize we are in jail. For us to be cured from an illness, first of all we will have to realize we are ill. In order to escape from a house in flames, first of all we will have to realize that the house is burning. Likewise, in order to put an end to *samsara*, we will have to realize we are in *samsara*, come to understand what the defects of *samsara* are, and come to know that there is a condition different from *samsara* that does not involve the defects of the latter.

I could keep on considering how the normal existence of the individual possessed by the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* is marked by lack of plenitude, dissatisfaction, discomfort, frustration and suffering (in other words, by *duhkha*), but I think that in contexts such as this, brevity could help arguments have a greater impact. What is essential is that we understand that, so long as the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* persists, we will never reach complete plenitude, absolute value, total pleasure or true happiness, and there will be no way to put an end to *duhkha*. In fact, so long as we remain under the illusion of being substantial entities, separate from the rest of the universe (and, consequently, of finding ourselves distanced from the plenitude of the continuum that the single nature of all entities is), *duhkha* will be ineluctable. The paradox is that so long as we experience ourselves as separate selves we are compelled to affirm our existence as such, and hence in all our attempts to reach plenitude and satisfaction, we try with all our strength at the same time to maintain the illusion of separateness and selfhood that bars us from attaining them.

Only the overcoming of *avidya* (*marigpa*) will uproot *duhkha* and put an end to the revolving human existence that Buddhists call “the wheel” (*samsara*). In fact, we will

be able to reach plenitude and stop being at the mercy of others and of adventitious circumstances if and only if, by practicing the methods for Awakening and liberation transmitted by one of the genuine millenary wisdom-traditions, the veil consisting in our apparently separate, dissatisfied, ever-frustrated consciousness dissolves, allowing for the disclosure of the absolute plenitude and completeness of our true condition. This cannot be brought to pass irreversibly from one day to the next, but can be achieved gradually if one engages in the process of repeated dissolution of delusion that progressively neutralizes the propensity for the manifestation of the latter and endows our life with ever-increasing meaning, making us feel ever more complete—and, finally, putting an end to craving (*trishna*) in general and thirst-for-existence in particular, so that we remain established in the absolute plenitude of Awakening.

The fact that, so long as we are possessed by the delusion called *avidya*, we are doomed to lack of plenitude, dissatisfaction, discomfort, frustration and recurrent pain and suffering, does not imply that we must abandon our current profession and habitual activities and way of life. When we consider the various Paths and vehicles of the Old or Nyingmapa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, we will see that it is only in the context of the Path of renunciation that *some* individuals (those who decide to become monks or nuns) must adopt a wholly new way of life. Other practitioners, though being aware that no human activity can be totally satisfactory in and of itself, do not deem it necessary to renounce possessions, spouse, pleasure, distinction in life, etc. On the contrary, for those who fulfill the necessary requirements, teaching others, writing books and so on can be of the greatest importance. Likewise, in some Buddhist Paths and vehicles, relationships with a partner and erotic pleasure, as well as moderate consumption of alcohol and meat, and other activities that the Path of renunciation does not consider “spiritual,” can be very important elements in the Path to Awakening. What Buddhist practitioners must achieve is the total uprooting of delusion, so that the whole of their activities may be approached in a radically different way, and so they may discover a plenitude that is preferable to the most intense and sustained pleasure.

In the Mahayana and higher vehicles, practitioners are required to go beyond the self-cherishing that makes them impervious to the sufferings and needs of others, and their motivation should not be merely to achieve their own freedom with regard to *duhkha* and the wheel of *samsara*, but to effectively help all beings liberate themselves from these two. However, if one is to help others to effectively liberate themselves from *duhkha* and the wheel of *samsara*, one must have freed oneself from these two by ridding oneself of their cause, which is the basic delusion called *avidya*. In fact, this delusion causes us to confuse the cardinal points, and hence so long as we are under its power we cannot lead others to the safe haven of *nirvana*: when the blind follow the blind, all fall together into the abyss.

There are many original Buddhist texts that one can consult in order to deepen one’s study of the first Noble Truth. In addition, there are Western texts based on Buddhism that consider it in great detail (including Chapter 1 of my book *Qué somos y adónde vamos*). And even in Western works that make no reference to Buddhism, we can find explanations that allow us get a better grasping of the first Noble Truth (examples of this being Blaise Pascal’s *Thoughts* and Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*).¹⁰⁹

MAHAYANA VERSION OF THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH

As we have seen, according to the *Mahayana* and other “higher vehicles,” the cause of *duhkha* (as well as of the *trishna* or thirst for existence which for the *Hinayana* is the cause of *duhkha*) is *avidya* or marigpa. In this context, the term must be understood in the three senses a Dzogchen classification gives the term: (1) as unawareness of the true nature of all reality (as this true nature is realized upon the self-recognition¹¹⁰ of the very face of nondual Awake awareness); (2) as the delusion that consists in taking the insubstantial as substantial, the relative as absolute, the dependent as independent, what lacks value and importance as having inherent value and importance,¹¹¹ the unsatisfactory as suitable to provide satisfaction and so on; and (3) as involving the inability, so long as (2) is active, to realize that we are under delusion.¹¹²

In terms of the *Mahamadhyamaka* sub-school of *Madhyamaka* philosophy, it could be said that this delusion implies that the uncompounded, unconditioned true nature of the whole of reality is veiled by our conditioned experiences, and that the conditioned becomes the ruling principle of human life. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the various schools of the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana* have very different conceptions about what is uncompounded and unconditioned and what is, on the other hand, compounded and conditioned—some of which will turn up in the chapters that follow. (A more in-depth discussion of some of those conceptions is to be found in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)

Moreover, in the *Abhidharma* teachings of the Path of renunciation to which the Four Noble Truths belong (which consists of the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana*), the terms *vidya* and *rigpa* mean “science;” consequently, in the context of those teachings the terms *avidya* and *marigpa*, composed by a privative prefix and the terms *vidya* and *rigpa*, should have the meaning of “ignorance.” However, neither on the Path of renunciation nor on any other Buddhist Path are the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* to be understood in the sense of lack of information or culture; in Mahayana terms, we could say that the ignorance they designate is the impediment to directly apprehending the true, single nature of all subjects and objects and therefore of the whole universe, and hence that it consists in a concealment: in fact, as stated above, this is the first of the senses the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* have in the threefold classification adopted here. Furthermore, this concealment of the true nature of all subjects and objects serves as the basis for the development of the delusion that consists in experiencing these subjects and objects as intrinsically separate, substantial, inherently existing, absolutely true entities: as noted above, this is the core of the second of the senses the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* have in the threefold classification adopted here. Finally, so long as normal deluded beings are possessed by this delusion, they are unable to realize that

they are deluded: as remarked above, this is the third of the senses the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* have in the threefold classification adopted here. Therefore, *avidya* and *marigpa* have the sense of “concealment,” but also that of “error” and “delusion” (which, as we have seen, normally involves the inability to realize that we are under delusion).

Etymologically, *avidya* and *marigpa* are the negation of *vidya* and *rigpa*, which in the threefold classification adopted here may be understood *qua* Base as the **nondual self-awareness at the root of all cognitions, samsaric or nirvanic, and *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit as the nondual, nonconceptual (Skt. *nishprapancha*) reGnition of this Awake, nondual self-awareness, in such a way that it makes this nondual awareness’ own face patent (rangngo shepaⁱ), unveiling the true nature of what those teachings call the Base (the true condition of all perceived objects and all perceiving subjects).**¹¹³ Hence it is clear that the first of the meanings of the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* is that of concealment of the true nature of the Base as this nature manifests upon Awakening. (It must be noted that, when considered from a cognitive perspective, the Base is also referred to as primordial gnosis [Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *yeshe*ⁱⁱ], nondual Base-awareness or nature of mind [Skt., *chittata* or *chitta eva*; Tib., *semnyi*ⁱⁱⁱ], etc.¹¹⁴) This is the reason why I have translated the terms *vidya* and *rigpa* alternatively as “Truth” (in the sense of “absence of delusion”), “Presence”¹¹⁵ and “Awake Awareness.”

The error or delusion designated by the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* is the primary cause of *duhkha*. In fact, our true nature is an undivided whole comprising both our own awareness and all of its contents (including all that, once delusion becomes active, appears to us as object, and all that we experience as external to us): it is an undivided continuum of plenitude having no empty spaces or gaps. When there arises the illusion that a mental subject is at a distance from the undivided continuum out of which objects are singled out, it appears as though the undivided whole consisting of awareness and its contents had been sundered, and therefore the illusory mental subject experiences the lack of the completeness and plenitude of that undivided whole. Thus it is clear that the lack of plenitude and completeness that makes up the core of *duhkha* arises as a consequence of the error or delusion called *avidya* once the latter manifests in the second and third of the senses the Dzogchen classification adopted here give the term.

But on what grounds is it being claimed that all subjects and objects result from the illusory sundering of an undivided substratum that constitutes a continuum and that comprises both our own awareness and the whole of its contents? Quite a few years ago I wrote a book discussing many of the existing and the possible philosophical positions regarding the constitution and nature of all that we experience, on the one hand, and of the one who experiences, on the other.^{iv} Though it is impossible to consider such a complex matter in a few short paragraphs, I quote below from an extremely condensed paper I left unfinished in order to concentrate on writing a series of books in English that include the present one:^v

ⁱ *Rang-ngo shes-pa.*

ⁱⁱ *Ye-shes*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Sems-nyid.*

^{iv} Capriles, Elías, 1986. I plan to further elaborate and refine the said discussion in an upcoming work, which I intend to be more sophisticated and precise than the former.

^v I had begun preparing a paper for the South-American Conference on Philosophy that took place in October 2002 in Caracas, Venezuela, but then I decided that, rather than attending the Conference, I would finish preparing an enlarged, enriched, revised and corrected English translation of *Budismo y dzogchén* (the First Part of which the reader has in his or her hands), would complete the correction of Capriles, Elías, electronic

(1) Realists and materialists posit the existence of a physical universe, which common sense regards as external to and independent from human perception. Among such people, those who believe that the sciences discover the precise structure and function of reality generally take consensually admitted theories in the field of physics to be a faithful description of the reality they interpret.¹¹⁶ Albert Einstein's Field Theory pictured the universe as a single energy field: a continuum without interruptions or empty spaces that may be aptly characterized as "absolute plenitude." More recent theories, such as Super-Unification hypotheses, David Bohm's Holonomic Theory, etc., lend even more weight to this vision of the universe as a continuum without inherent or substantial divisions, which being devoid of interruptions or empty spaces is free of multiplicity—a vision that, if correct, would imply that our perception of the cosmos as a multiplicity of substances is an error or delusion.

In the case of those who take the discoveries of the sciences to be true, the above conception may serve as an antidote to the belief that material entities are self-existent and substantial; now we must provide them with an antidote to the belief that mental phenomena are manifestations of a substance different from the universal energy field. In order to dismiss the views of those realist and nondialectical materialist philosophers who, basing themselves on early twenty century physics, asserted that mental phenomena (including consciousness, the mental subject, dreams, perceptions and so on) necessarily have to be made of something, and that it would be absurd to think that they consist of something other than the energy field that makes up the physical universe, V. I. Leninⁱ found no other way than sophistically to define "matter" as a "philosophical category" and declare that by definition "mental" phenomena are excluded from this category. At any rate, the dualistic assertion of the supposed existence of two wholly different substances, one mental and the other one physical, which would not be made of by the same energy, would resurrect the insurmountable philosophical problem René Descartes faced when he tried to explain how the *res cogitans* communicated with the *res extensa*.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the realist and the materialist would be wiser if they asserted that dreams, perceptions and psychic experiences in general, as well as consciousness and the mental subject, are part of the universal energy field, and thus that it is a delusion for the mental subject to feel different and separate from the physical world.¹¹⁸

(2) Extreme idealists claim that there is no physical world external to and independent from human experience, and therefore that all entities are made of the stuff of which mental experiences are made. Those who adopt this theory have to acknowledge that there is no reason for believing that stuff has interruptions or empty spaces, and thus implicitly they would be positing a continuum just like Einstein's, but that would be psychic rather than physical (in fact, extreme idealists necessarily would have to conclude that Einstein produced his theory on the basis of the study of his own experience, and therefore that it is the latter that, if Einstein's methods and conclusions were perfectly sound, is a continuum). If a view like this one were correct, then the entities that we categorize as "material" would be part of a continuum and would not at all be substantial or self-existent, and the mental subject and other mental phenomena also would be part of the continuum of which all of the entities that normally we regard as "physical" are part. Therefore, it would be a delusion to perceive physical entities as being self-existent, and it would be equally delusory for the mental subject to feel different and separate from the so-called physical world.¹¹⁹

Actually, it would be difficult to distinguish this view from that indicated as (1), for both (1) and (2) claim that what we regard as physical and what we regard as psychical are made of the same

publication 2007, 3 vols., and would write Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004. So I stopped writing the paper, which I was just beginning, but conserved this quotation, which seemed to fit here.

ⁱ Ulianov (Lenin), Vladimir Illich, this English ed., 1977.

stuff, and therefore this stuff would not have either *genus proximum* or *differentiam specificam*¹²⁰—which would make it absurd to call it either “physical” or “psychical.”¹²¹

(3) Skepticism, critical phenomenism and phenomenology acknowledge the imperative to maintain some type of *epoche* or suspension of judgment with regard to the alleged substantial separation between mind and matter, the supposed existence of an objective world external to and independent from experience, and so on. Those who hold such views acknowledge that, whether or not there is a universe external to and independent from human perception, all we can know is our experience. And since most people consider our experience to be made of a single “mental” stuff and deem this “mental stuff” to be a continuum, most people should agree that it is a delusion to perceive physical entities as being self-existent, and that it would be equally delusory for the mental subject to feel different and separate from the entities that appear to it as object.

(4) The Dzogchen teachings assert that all phenomena are manifestations of a continuum of basic energy,¹²² which in *samsara* manifests as two *apparently* separate dimensions, but in *nirvana* manifests as a single, continuous, indivisible dimension. In fact, in *samsara*, as a result of the manifestation of a form of energy called *tse*ⁱ, the phenomena of this form of energy, which include all of what we wrongly experience as constituting a self-existing “physical” world, appear to lie in an external dimension or *jing*ⁱⁱ, whereas those of the form of energy called *dang*ⁱⁱⁱ, which include all thoughts and all that we regard as “mental phenomena,” and which in themselves are neither “internal” nor “external,” seem to lie in an internal dimension or “internal *jing*.”¹²³ In turn, in *nirvana* the appearance of the existence of two different dimensions, one internal and the other external, simply does not arise. Therefore, in terms of this conception it would be utterly absurd to ask whether one of the three options discussed above is correct and the others are wrong: since both what we experience as internal and what we experience as external are forms of manifestation of a basic energy that in truth is a single continuum, it would be absurd to claim that there is a physical universe of which thought is part, or a mental universe of which the apparently physical universe is a manifestation—and it would be equally absurd to posit an inherently existing external world that we may be either capable or incapable of knowing.

Even though this Dzogchen way of explaining cannot be demonstrated to be true by logical proof, it is demonstrated to be true by realization. In fact, in *nirvana* we realize that there was always a single continuum of energy, which in *samsara* manifested as though there were two different dimensions, one internal and the other one external.

At any rate, Madhyamaka philosophy did a good job of refuting the supposed inherently separate existence of entities, and the Mahayana in general has striven to show that there is no multiplicity of substances, but a single universal continuum, on the basis of which delusory mental activity produces the illusion of substantial multiplicity.^{iv} As soon as the continuum of plenitude that is the single nature of all entities is illusorily sundered, and thereby we come to feel separate from our objects, we are under the error or delusion that Buddhists call *avidya* or *marigpa*. It is this illusory sundering that gives rise to the lack of completeness and plenitude we have been considering, and to the uncontrollable longing to fill it; therefore, there can be no doubt that (as acknowledged in the teaching of the *pratitya*

ⁱ *rTsal*.

ⁱⁱ *dByings*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *gDangs*.

^{iv} See Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

samutpada featuring the twelve links or *nidana* of interdependent origination) *avidya* is the cause of the craving, avidity or thirst called *trishna*. Since, as we have seen, according to Shakyamuni's inaugural discourse in the First Promulgation, *trishna* was the cause of *duhkha*, *avidya* is the cause of the cause of *duhkha* and thus must be regarded as being the true second Noble Truth.

This illusory sundering of the continuum of plenitude that is the single nature of all entities is a function of the “delusory valuation-absolutization” (Skt., *samaropa* / *adhyaropa*; Tib., *drodok*ⁱ) of thought.¹²⁴ This delusory valuation / absolutization—which is inherent to *avidya* or *marigpa* in the second and third of the senses the term has in the threefold classification adopted here—is the result of an activity of the organism that endows the contents of thought with illusory *value* and illusory *truth* and *importance*: a vibratory activity that seems to emanate from, or to be concentrated in, the center of the chest at the level of the heart, “charges” our thoughts with apparent value, truth and importance, even though in themselves these have neither value nor worthlessness, neither truth nor untruth, neither importance nor unimportance. Later on we will see that the inner Tantras, and in particular the *Atiyoga*, divides thoughts into three main types: coarse, subtle or intuitive, and super-subtle. Our feeling of lack results from the *delusory valuation* or *absolutization* of the super-subtle thought-structure known as the “directional threefold thought structure” (Tin., *khorsum*ⁱⁱ), which consists in the conception that there is an experience (or action, etc.), an experiencer (or agent, etc.) and something experienced (or acted on, etc.).¹²⁵ When the directional threefold thought structure is *delusorily valued* / *absolutized*, the result is the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, which involves a directional structuring of experience and the illusory, delusive subject-object dichotomy, and which veils the indivisibility of the Base or *zhi*ⁱⁱⁱ as the latter seems to suffer a cleavage and therefore totality seems to be disrupted, and thus giving rise to the subject's feeling of lack-of-completeness, which is the core of *duhkha*—that is, of the First Noble Truth. In fact, once there arises the illusory mental subject that experiences itself as intrinsically separate from the rest of the continuum that the single nature of all entities is, that subject experiences the lack of the plenitude and completeness that characterizes this continuum.

Though the teachings distinguish between the mind (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem*^{iv}), which is defined as consciousness or awareness of a form, and a series of mental factors or mental events (Skt., *chaitasika*; Tib., *semjung*) involved in the cognition of that form, both are indivisible aspects of the cognitive apparatus of deluded beings.¹²⁶ With regard to the former, the *Abhidharmakosha* declares, “consciousness is a selecting awareness,”^v and also, “perception (involves) a process of singling out.”^{vi} This refers to the occurrences that take place immediately after consciousness comes to experience itself as separate from the rest of the continuum that the single nature of all entities is: upon facing the continuum of what appears as object, another apparent split takes place in our experience, whereby the continuum of what appears as object is divided into figure and ground. Our attention circumscribes itself to one segment of the sensory field that we find interesting among those that conserve their

ⁱ *sGro*-’dogs.

ⁱⁱ *’Khor-gsum*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *gZhi*. Often the Base is called *yezhi* (*ye-gzhi*) or “Primordial Base.”

^{iv} *Sems*.

^v Guenther, Herbert V. and L. Kawamura, trans., 1975.

^{vi} *Ibidem*.

configuration and that we are used to associate with one of our concepts, singling it out as figure and taking it as object, and leaves the rest of the field sunk in a “penumbra of consciousness,” so that it becomes background. It is at this stage that the mental factor or mental event called “recognition”¹²⁷ enters into play, causing us to understand the segment that was singled out in terms of the corresponding concept. (The tendency to single out, within the ever-changing totality of sense-data, segments of this totality that maintain a certain continuity of pattern, is the function of a pre-conceptual interest, which is the precondition for the subsequent application of the concepts that will take part in the recognition of objects.¹²⁸ Hence, it is clear that perception is an active process driven by impulses and concepts in our own psyche rather than consisting in the passive reception of data [as both Aristotleⁱ and Lenin,ⁱⁱ among other Western thinkers, wrongly believed].)

Though the continuum of what appears as object was split by our own mental functions, we are under the illusion that this split is inherent to a *given* reality that we take to be self-existent and objective, and thus we think that the figure is a substantial, self-existent entity, in itself separate from everything that was turned into background.¹²⁹ And in the immediately following moment we wrongly believe the figure is inherently and absolutely the mental concept in terms of which we have understood it (i.e., we believe that the segment we have singled out is inherently and absolutely a dog, a house, this or that human individual, etc., and that it is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, etc.). Both illusions are functions of the delusory valuation of thoughts: in this case, of the delusory valuation of the intuitive thoughts in terms of which we recognize the segments of the sensory field that our mental functions successively single out.¹³⁰

We also may recognize qualities in the object, and conclude that the “entity” we face has such or such inherent qualities.¹³¹ According to the qualities that we recognize, it may happen that we come to a positive or a negative judgment that results in a feeling-tone of pleasure or displeasure, respectively, and that endows our object with positive or negative value—which then we believe to be inherent to the object. In fact, as we have seen, so long as we experience ourselves as mental subjects at a distance of our objects, we are doomed to accept the latter, experiencing a fleeting pleasure and endowing them with positive value; reject them, experiencing pain and endowing them with negative value; or ignore them, deriving a neutral sensation and not endowing them with either value. However, all the ensuing states will be pervaded by the underlying feeling of lack that derives from experiencing ourselves as being at a distance from the plenitude of the undivided continuum of our true nature. Furthermore, our judgment of the qualities of our objects may lead us to try to appropriate those we deem desirable, or, conversely, to try to keep at bay or destroy those we find annoying or menacing: no wonder *avidya* or *marigpa* is at the root of all individual, social and inter-social conflicts, and is the deepest cause of ecological crisis.

We have seen that the delusory valuation of the “directional threefold thought structure” illusorily splits the continuum of our awareness and its contents by giving rise to the appearance of there being an experiencer-doer, an experience or action, and an object that is experienced or acted upon. The experiencer-doer is what I have been calling the mental subject, which we consider as the core of our being and conceive as a soul or mind: as an intrinsically separate, autonomous and independent source of perception, thought and action, inherently different from the “material” world and from “other souls or minds.” Furthermore,

ⁱ Aristotle, this English ed., 1991.

ⁱⁱ Ulianov (Lenin), Vladimir Illich, this English ed., 1977.

the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa involves believing consciousness and intelligence to be functions of this illusory, apparently separate mental subject, rather than being functions of the single nature of all entities, as is in truth the case.

We have seen that all Buddhist schools (including those of the Hinayana that fail to assert the absence of a self-nature in phenomena that are not human beings¹³²) denounced the delusion consisting in believing ourselves to be inherently existing, self-sufficient, substantial selves and experiencing ourselves as such.¹³³ Many non-Buddhist, Western philosophers also denounced this delusion; to begin with, the younger Greek contemporary of Shakyamuni, Heraclitus of Ephesus, wrote:¹³⁴

“...Although the *logos* [or universal intelligence] is [the single and] common [nature of all intellects], the majority [of human beings] live as if they had a separate and personal intelligence [of their own].”

Over two thousand two hundred years after Heraclitus, Scottish philosopher David Hume asserted our belief in the substantiality of the “I” to be nothing but an illusion, and explained this illusion in terms of the concept of a “bundle.”¹³⁵ A short time after Hume, Georg Cristoph Lichtenberg stated:¹³⁶

[It would be better to use an impersonal formula and, rather than saying *I think*,] to say “*there is thinking*,” just as one says “there is lightening.”

In turn, in the twentieth century Mexican poet Octavio Paz wrote:¹³⁷

...the words that think me upon thinking them;
I am the shadow projected by my words.

The illusion that we are intrinsically separate, autonomous, independent sources of perception, thought and action, inherently different from the “material world” and from “other souls or minds,” implies a considerable degree of anguish, insofar as our life or our death, our well-being or our distress, our success or our failure (as well as those of the individuals and possessions, including dear ones, that may be affected by our actions) depend directly on the decisions we, *qua* separate sources of decision and action, have to make again and again throughout our lives. Since anguish is painful and distressing, as shown by Existential and Existentialist philosophers, once it arises we have to elude it and do so by a plethora of means.¹³⁸ Moreover, in the long run the evolution of delusion turns the illusion of being at a distance from the “physical world” into the cause of antisomatism, which is at the root of what Gregory Bateson called “conscious purpose versus Nature” and therefore of ecological crisis.ⁱⁱ

Even though for a few paragraphs this book may become a little more difficult to read, at this point it is useful to go a little further beyond the *Mahayana* and consider the arising of the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa by combining the concepts related to the *Kalachakra Tantra* that Tibetan Lama Tarthang Tulku expounded in *Time, Space and Knowledge*,ⁱⁱⁱ with the characteristically Dzogchen concept of the Base as our own original condition of

ⁱ Cited in Capriles, Elías, 1994.

ⁱⁱ Bateson, Gregory, 1968; reprinted in Bateson, Gregory, 1972.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tarthang Tulku, 1977a.

Dzogchen—a term that means “total plenitude / completeness and perfection.”¹³⁹ In these terms we could say that *avidya* or *marigpa* implies an illusory sundering of the *indivisibility of Total Space-Time-Awareness* that is our original condition of total plenitude and completeness (Dzogchen, when the emphasis is placed on its *katak*ⁱ aspect), by means of the illusory cleavage of our nondual awareness or nondual gnosis into the two poles of dualistic knowledge, which are the subject and the object.¹⁴⁰ Thus there arises the illusion of a mental subject separate from the spatial continuum of potential objects and from the temporal continuum that properly can be called *nowness*: the mental subject that, as Heraclitus rightly noted, we erroneously regard as a separate source of cognition, thought and action.

Upon referring to our *original condition of total plenitude and completeness* (Dzogchen, when the emphasis is placed on its *katak* aspect), we have spoken of *total space-time-awareness*. This is not intended to imply that there are three aspects of this condition different or separate from each other. It is *once the illusory rupture of this condition has occurred*, and the *false appearance* denounced by Heraclitus has arisen, that one wrongly believes oneself to be a soul or mind (the mental subject) that is the agent of perception, thought and action and that is inherently separated, both from other subjects and from potential objects—and from the spatio-temporal continuum as well. And it is also at this point that the spatio-temporal continuum is disrupted in our experience, so that there arises the illusion that space and time are “dimensions” inherently separate from one another, and from human knowledge as well.

The illusory sundering of our *original condition of total completeness and plenitude* introduces the illusion of a hiatus, breach or gap: we experience ourselves as though we were at a distance from the absolute plenitude of the spatial continuum in which all entities manifest and that all entities are, giving rise to the spatial dimension and the illusion of “being before the universe,” and we experience ourselves as though we were at a distance from the absolute completeness and plenitude of the indivisible “now,” giving rise to the temporal dimension and the illusion of being in an inapprehensible moment that seems to separate the future from the past. Plato remarked that the etymology of the term “present” is “being before,” and in fact the illusory hiatus, break or gap that arises when the *illusory fracture* of *total space-time-awareness* occurs, manifests in the temporal plane as the *present* that artificially separates the future from the past, whereas in the spatial plane it manifests as the illusion of *being before* the “physical” world. This is the reason why I have chosen to use the term “present” only when the illusion of being at a distance both from the “now” and from the “physical universe” is manifest.

Thus, from a temporal perspective it may be said that the present is the *illusory nothingness* consisting in the mathematical instant (that is, an instant without any duration) that separates the past from the future, and therefore that it is nothing but the *illusion of a nothingness, a vacuum or a lack*; conversely, the “now” is the absolute plenitude and completeness of nonseparation between the past and the future. In fact, if we were to fully realize the now, ceasing to experience ourselves as though we were at a distance from it, we would find that it is absolute plenitude and completeness—just as is the case, spatially, with the totality of our own true condition (which, in the “extremely realistic” terms expressed above as “option [1]” may be represented by the single energy field that, according to Einstein and physics after him, the universe is). Contrariwise, the present, being an illusory distance

ⁱ *Ka-dag*.

with respect to the now, is the experience of lack that results from experiencing ourselves as separate from our own condition of total plenitude and completeness.

The illusion of a hiatus or gap corresponds to the “crossing point” of the lines of the three spatial dimensions (“place”) and the line of the dimension of time (“moment”) in the experience of any given individual—that is, to the point where there seems to be found the illusory, apparently separate, mental subject. This “crossing point” does not occupy any space or time, but *qua* reference point it is the *conditio sine qua non* of spatiotemporal perception (Descartes conceived the *res cogitans* as a soul that did not occupy any space, precisely because he took the illusory mental subject, which does not occupy any space, to be a substantial and immortal soul¹⁴¹).

The feeling of lack that issues from experiencing ourselves as if we were at a distance from the uninterrupted plenitude of the continuum of total space, as well as from the uninterrupted plenitude of total time manifesting as the “now,” is the root of *trishna* (craving, avidity and thirst), which consists in the urge to fill up the lack—a task that, as we have seen, we attempt to accomplish through a plethora of means that prevent us from achieving our goal, insofar as all of them affirm and sustain the illusion that we are intrinsically separate entities, which is the very root of the sensation of lack. Paradoxically, it is the basic delusion at the root of *trishna* that gives rise to the need for the mental subject to assert itself as an existent, for it is upon experiencing the “crossing point” of the lines of the three spatial dimensions (“place”) and the line of the dimension of time (“moment”), which is *nothing at all*, as though it were an apparently separate mental subject, that the compulsion comes forth for the latter to assert itself¹⁴² as an absolutely true and important entity. This compulsion is known as *ahamkara* or “self-preoccupation,” which is a concept of the greatest importance in the Dzogchen teaching.

Back to the explanations proper to the *Sutrayana* Path of renunciation, it must be said that *avidya* or marigpa is the cause, not only of *trishna* and of *duhkha*, but of human evil as well. As I have explained in other works,ⁱ basic delusion, which implies believing ourselves to be substantial, intrinsically separate *selves* or *egos*, progressively develops as the cosmic cycle (aeon or *kalpa*ⁱⁱ) evolves, and with the passing of time it comes to beget unmitigated *selfishness* or *egotism*: the interest in ourselves and lack of concern for others (especially if they are not close to us) that causes us to be ready to harm them in all possible ways in order to obtain what we erroneously believe will lead to our own benefit. It was owing to the generalization of this evil that it became necessary to decree religious, moral and legal norms banning those courses of behavior that are harmful to others. However, this “solution” cannot beget true virtue, for the latter can only arise from doing away with the illusion of being substantial *selves* or *egos* and thus overcoming *selfishness* or *egotism*; it cannot come from straitjacketing ego-delusion, which would be like tying a camel in the desert: when it is free, the animal stays quiet, but when we tether it, it ceaselessly pulls and jumps trying to set itself free. The attempt to achieve virtue implies that it is not inherent in us, but something external that we must obtain; consequently, it will only keep us at a distance from it.¹⁴³

Something worse happens in the case of the impulse to destroy evil: since this impulse is a manifestation of hatred, which is evil, it reinforces the evil in us, making it doubly evil and perverse. Worse still, when directed against the “sinner” and the “perverse:”ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Capriles, Elías, 1994; Capriles, Elías, 2000b; etc.

ⁱⁱ Tib., *bdKal-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ravignani, Patrick, 1972, Spanish 1978.

“...the worst [acts of] violence are misconstrued as acts of piety.”

Consequently, everyone is willing to commit atrocities toward the convict much worse than the ones supposedly committed by the alleged criminal¹⁴⁴—and may even stone the adulteress to death. In general, we distance ourselves from virtue by trying to possess it and we exacerbate evil by trying to destroy it.¹⁴⁵

Furthermore, the basic human delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* implies self-consciousness, which causes self-interference to hinder the whole of our acts, making them imprecise and imperfect. As expressed in the English rhyme:ⁱ

“ The centipede was happy, quite,
until the toad for fun
or maybe it was out of spite,
asked, “Pray, which leg goes after which?”
which wrought his mind to such a pitch
he lay demented in a ditch
forgetting how to run.”

The self-encumbering this rhyme expresses is the consequence of the cleavage that characterizes the deluded human psyche, wherein one aspect controls, governs and directs, and another is controlled, governed or directed. So long as the attention of a subject toward an object does not arise, and thus undivided, unhindered total awareness is not split, one suffers no impediment;¹⁴⁶ however, if one comes to self-consciously reflect on one's action, the dualistic attention this introduces seemingly splits total awareness, interrupting the unhindered, masterful flow of unselfconscious spontaneity—which will be particularly obstructive if, as one carries out an action, one is constantly judging one's performance and causing continual wavering through one's attempts to correct it. It is of particular consequence that, in self-conscious action, consciousness at the very moment of acting takes as its object the entity it perceives as the agent (i.e., the individual who is acting), and establishes with it what Sartre called “a link of being”ⁱⁱ—whereby the subject momentarily becomes an object lacking subjectivity and capacity to act, which gives rise to an interference that spoils the action.

The effects of the above are clear in the case of artisans or artists; even though they may temporarily “let go” and carry out their activity masterfully, so long as they are possessed by the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* and, consequently, find themselves inwardly split, there is a possibility that the controlling aspect of their psyche will try to direct their artistic activity at will, correcting it as they carry it out, and thus interfering with the spontaneous creative flow of the true, single nature of all entities. Therefore, not only happiness, but also consummate performance in arts, crafts, sports, practical matters and everyday life, is hindered by the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa*.

Among other things, the term *karma* refers to: (1) intentional, self-conscious action; (2) the propensities such action establishes; and (3) the causes this action creates for ripening future results. Buddhism classifies *karma* into good, bad and neutral; so long as an individual cannot go beyond *karma*, he or she must strive to avoid creating negative karmas, which may

ⁱ Watts, Alan W., 1956.

ⁱⁱ Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980.

be harmful to others and that in the future will be a source of unpleasant experiences to the agent who accumulated them. However, by its very nature, *karma*—no matter whether positive or negative—*produces* effects, which, being *produced*, are made or conditioned, and as such conceal our true, uncompounded, unconditioned and unmade nature, giving rise to, or sustaining, *samsara*. Therefore, positive *karma*, just as much as negative or neutral *karma*, asserts and maintains the basic human delusion at the root of *samsara* (Tibetan: *khorwa*)ⁱ¹⁴⁷ that Buddhism intends to uproot. In fact, by the very nature of spinning wheels, whichever point of the wheel that at some time goes up will have to come down later on; therefore, avoiding bad karmas and carrying out only good karmas would not be a definitive solution to our problems, for it will cause us to go up, only to come down again at some point. These problems will be definitively overcome only when the illusion of separate agency and in general the experience that causes us to perceive phenomena as being compounded, conditioned and made,¹⁴⁸ be uprooted through the repeated recognition—i.e., the direct realization, beyond the recognition of a collection of characteristics in terms of a concept¹⁴⁹—(of) the true, uncompounded, unconditioned and unmade nature: only thus will we overcome *karma* itself, putting an end to the spinning of the wheel of *samsara*.

A delusion is a distorted perception of reality. Someone who, being deluded with regard to the direction of cardinal points, tries to go north, at a given moment could as well discover she or he is going south. As we have seen, this happens all the time in our daily lives, as so often our attempts to get pleasure result in pain, the actions whereby we intend to get happiness give rise to unhappiness, what we do achieve security produces insecurity, and so on and on. In fact, the essential human delusion (*avidya* or *marigpa*) gives rise to an inverted dynamic that often causes us to achieve with our actions the very opposite of what we set out to accomplish—which is what a popular twentieth century British-born author called “law of inverted effect” or “reverse law”.ⁱⁱ¹⁵⁰ The great Dzogchen Master Vimalamitra provided us with an excellent example of this law in the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces*, where he noted that all the happiness of *samsara*, even if it momentarily appears as such, is in reality only suffering, maturing in the same way as the effects of eating an appetizing but poisonous fruit.ⁱⁱⁱ again and again the appetizing aspect of the fruits of *samsara* beguile us into gobbling them, and yet we fail to learn from the ensuing stomachaches. In *The Precious Vase: Instructions on the Base of Santi Maha Samgha*, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu explains the examples with which the *mahasiddha* Sarahapada illustrated this law:^{iv}

Not knowing what to accept and what to reject, even though we crave happiness we obtain only sorrow, like a moth that, attracted by a flame dives into it and is burnt alive; or like a bee that, due to its attachment to nectar, sucks a flower and cannot disengage from it, dying trapped inside; or like a deer killed by hunters while it listens to the sound of the flute; like fish that, attached to the taste of the food on the fisherman’s hook, die on the hot sand; like an elephant that, craving contact with something cool, goes into a muddy pool and dies because it cannot get out. In fact the *Treasury of the Dohas* (*Do ha mdzod*) says:

ⁱ *Khor-ba*.

ⁱⁱ Watts, Alan W., 1951.

ⁱⁱⁱ Vimalamitra/ Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Tibetan Text 2, p. 6, 6. Quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 41.

^{iv} Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 44.

Observe the deeds of the fish, the moth, the elephant, the bee and the deer, [each of which brings about its own suffering through attachment to objects of one of the five senses]! [...]

From the *Three Sections of the Letters of the Five Spaces* (op. 3: p. 7, 1):

“There is no end to all the various secondary causes, just like following the mirage of a spring of water.”

In fact all the beings that transmigrate through the power of *karma*, whether they are born in the higher or lower states, are in fact beguiled and dominated by the diverse secondary causes so whatever actions they perform become a cause of suffering. They are never content with what they do and there is nothing on which they can really rely...

It is precisely this dynamic that is at the root of the present ecological crisis: by trying, like the architects of Babel, to reach Heaven by building a material structure, we have given rise to a hell on earth and have come to the edge of the abyss of our own extinction. In fact, the most upright and regardful scientists on the planet have warned that, if current trends of human action on the biosphere are maintained, ecological crisis will very likely put an end to life on our planet, or at least disrupt human society—not improbably in the current century.¹⁵¹ Our way of life sacrifices future generations in their entirety and many members of present generations in exchange for an apparent comfort that only a few “privileged ones” can attain, but that does not provide even these few with any degree of genuine happiness. Like all other members of technological civilization, those who live in opulence are always beset by dissatisfaction, anxiety and neurosis, and have no access to the nonconceptual unveiling of the nondual Flow of our true nature that makes life truly Meaningful.¹⁵² Furthermore, those who live in opulence and wield power are at the outermost bounds of the wheel of *samsara*, and as Pascal noted, those who keep so far from the center are made to fall far more precipitously by the wheel’s turnings.

The project of Modernity is a product of the exacerbation of the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa*, which has given rise to an extreme perceptual fragmentation resulting in a lack of overall understanding of a universe that, in itself, is an indivisible continuum. This illusory fragmentation and ensuing lack of overall understanding may be illustrated by the story of the six blind men and the elephant told in the *Udana*, third book of the *Khuddaka Nikaya* in the Pali Canon, basis of Hinayana Buddhism:ⁱ the one who held the elephant’s head asserted the object to be like a pot; the one who held the ear claimed that it was like a winnowing fan; etc.: each of them held so firmly to his partial view, taking it to be an accurate, absolute view of totality, that they quarreled bitterly, unable to come to an agreement as to the nature of the object before them. The same story is told in the *Tathagatagarbhasutra*, pertaining to the Sanskrit Canon of Mahayana Buddhism, as follows:ⁱⁱ

The king assembled many blind men and, [making them face] an elephant, commanded, “Describe [this object’s] particular characteristics.” Those among them who felt the elephant’s nose said that [the object] resembled an iron hook. Those who felt the eyes said that [it] resembled bowls. Those who felt the ears said [it] resembled winnowing baskets. Those who

ⁱ P.T.S., pp. 66-68; Venkata Ramanan, 1966, pp. 49-50, reference in note 138 to ch. I, p. 344.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 3, quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 295. The parts in parentheses are those I modified in order to make the text more comprehensible in the context in which it is being used.

felt the back said it resembled a sedan chair, and those who felt the tail said it resembled a string. Indeed, though [their description responded to the parts of the] elephant [they touched], they were lacking in overall understanding...

In a modified version of this story that was popularized by Sufi poets in Islamic countries, each of the men grasped a different part of the pachyderm, reaching a diverse conclusion as to what the animal was: the one who took hold of its trunk said it was a hose; the one who seized its ear thought it was a fan; the one who put his hand on its back decided it was a throne; the one who clasped its leg concluded it was a pillar and, finally, the one who grabbed its tail threw it away in terror, believing it to be a snake.¹⁵³

The modern exacerbation of the essential human delusion, by carrying to its logical extreme our sensation of being entities inherently separate and independent from the rest of nature, and in general our fragmentary perception of the universe as though it were the sum of intrinsically separate, self-existent and unconnected entities, has made us worse than the men with the elephant. It has led us to develop and implement the technological project aimed at destroying the parts of the world that annoyed us and to appropriate those that pleased us, which has seriously impaired the functionality of the worldwide ecosystem of which we are parts and on which our survival as a species depends. A Western author illustrated this by saying that our incapacity to grasp the unity of the coin of life has led us to develop and apply powerful corrosives to destroy the side that we deemed undesirable—death, illness, pain, troubles, etc.—and to protect the side we considered desirable—life, health, pleasure, comfort, etc... These corrosives, by boring a hole through the coin, now are on the verge of destroying the side we were intent on preserving.¹⁵⁴

In order to illustrate the narrow and fragmentary state of consciousness inherent to *avidya-marigpa* that a tradition associated with the *Kalachakra Tantra* calls “small space-time-knowledge,”ⁱ¹⁵⁵ the Buddha Shakyamuni resorted to the example of a frog that, having been confined all its life to the bottom of a well, thought the sky was a small blue circle.ⁱⁱ This is the type of consciousness illustrated by the famous adage of the tree that does not allow the individual to see the forest, of which Gregory Bateson said that, when it perceives an arc, it fails to realize that it is part of a circuit. Consequently, when an arc annoys us, we aim at it our powerful technological weapons, destroying the circuit that the arc is part of; setting fire to the tree in front of us, we burn the forest in which we stand, bringing about our own destruction.

In fact, according to the cyclical theory of human evolution and history that Buddhist Tantrism and Dzogchen share with other systems of thought, Eastern as well as Greco-Roman, the delusion called *avidya*, and therefore the fragmentary perception that prevents the manifestation of systemic wisdom, has been developing progressively since time immemorial.¹⁵⁶ In the primordial Golden Age, Era of Truth (*satyayuga*) or Age of Perfection (*kritayuga*) the true nature of the universe was evident to all, and the behavior of human beings was the spontaneous, selfless flow of that nature, which impartially accomplished the benefit of all. However, with the passing of time the progressive development of basic human delusion came to veil the true condition of all entities, and later on humankind as a whole lost the capacity to shed the veil even at the time of sacred rituals and festivals—as a result of

ⁱ Cf. Tarthang Tulku, 1977a.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan lama Dungsé Thinle Norbu Rinpoche often uses this example.

which deluded, selfish action came to prevail, and progressively turned ever more ignorant and wicked.

This progressive development of delusion impelled the process of degeneration that followed its course one era after another until, at the end of the Iron Age, Era of Darkness or Dark Age (*kaliyuga*), in which we presently find ourselves, it has given rise to the ecological crisis that has taken us to the brink of our own extinction. This means that the basic delusion that has been developing during the entire evolutionary cycle (*kalpa*) has now completed its experiential *reductio ad absurdum*, having proven unviable; therefore, now we have the opportunity to overcome it as a species and thus to recover the systemic wisdom and basic virtue it impeded.¹⁵⁷ Only if we succeed in doing so will we have real possibilities of avoiding extinction as a species—which shows that E. F. Schumacher was right when he stated:ⁱ

We can say today that man is far too clever to be able to survive without wisdom. No one is really working for peace unless he is working primarily for the restoration of wisdom.

Not only is the widespread recovery of true systemic wisdom the condition for the possible survival of humankind; if it were accomplished on a sufficiently large scale, it would result in the transition to a new Golden Age, Era of Truth or Age of Perfection. So that the relevance of Buddhism to the present predicament of humankind and its function in the possible ushering in of a new age of harmony may be fully appreciated, I find it fitting to explain the ecological crisis in terms of the Four Noble Truths:

(1) The ecological crisis is so grave that, if everything goes on as it is, human society will be disrupted and life may even come to disappear from the planet, possibly within the current century. Meanwhile, natural disasters will proliferate, our existence will become ever more miserable, and an increasing number of human beings will be incapable of adapting to the social and biological environment, which will give rise to extremely high levels of stress, neurosis and psychosis, serious illnesses and suicides.

(2) There is a primary cause of the ecological crisis, which is the fragmentation of human perception and extreme selfishness inherent in fully developed *avidya*. If we feel inherently separate from the rest of the human species, sooner or later we will give rise to the religious, social, economic, racial and ideological divisions, within societies as well as between different human groups, which are at the root of injustices and conflicts. If we feel inherently separate from the rest of the ecosystem, being unaware of ecological interdependence, we are likely to wish to destroy the aspects of nature that disturb us and appropriate those we believe will endow us with comfort, pleasure and security—giving rise to the technological project that has destroyed the systems on which life depends.

(3) There is a solution to the ecological crisis, which lies in the eradication of its primary cause—the basic human delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa*—and of its secondary causes—the technological project of domination and exploitation of nature and of other human beings, and deep underlying political, economic and social inequality.

(4) The Buddhist Path can eradicate the causes of ecological crisis and restore an era of communitarian, harmonious social organization based on the systemic wisdom that frees us from the urge to obtain ever more manipulative knowledge, and allows us to use the knowledge we already possess in ways that are beneficial to the biosphere as a whole, and to all beings without distinctions.

ⁱ Schumacher, E. F., 1973.

All of this shows that fully developed *avidya*, as a delusion, is not very different from the ones that psychiatrists have described as a result of the observation of their psychotic patients. *Madhyamika-Prasangika* Master Chandrakirti told the fable of a king that consulted a famous astrologer, who predicted that a rainfall of “maddening water” would contaminate all water deposits in his kingdom, driving insane all of those who drank the water. The king warned his ministers and subjects, so that everyone would prepare a protected supply of water and thus could avoid drinking the water that would derange them. However, the subjects, being less wealthy, exhausted their reserves more rapidly and at some point had to drink contaminated water. Since the king and the ministers did not behave like the subjects who had drunk the maddening water, the latter concluded that they had become insane. When the ministers finished their reserves, they also had to drink the deranging water, upon which the rest of the subjects thought the ministers had become normal, and the only one still insane was the king. Since now both the people and his ministers coincided that the king was insane, in order to keep his kingdom and to avoid being impeached and put into an asylum, the king had no option but to drink the contaminated water.¹⁵⁸

So long as space-time-awareness is not total, there is delusion, which is the only valid criterion for diagnosing insanity, and which implies the consequences that derive from a distorted or inverted perception of reality: a greater or lesser degree of men-with-the-elephant effect, of frog-in-the-well effect, of self-impeded centipede effect,¹⁵⁹ and so on.

ⁱ Chandrakirti, *Bodhisattvayogacaryacatuhsatakatika* (Tib., *dBu-ma bzhi-brgya-pa'i 'grel-pa*, or *Byang chub sems dpa'i rnal 'byor spyod pa gzhi brgya pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa*): a Commentary to Aryadeva's *Chatuhishataka* (Tib., *bZhi-brgya-pa*). Cf. Gendün Chöphel (*dGe-'dun chos-'phel*), *dBu ma'i zab gdad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad klu sgrub dgongs rgyan* (an English version of this text by Amdo scholar Pema Wangyäl and American scholar Jean Mulligan may have been published by the time the reader is reading these words). The story of the crazy water is also told in Trungpa, Chögyam 1976. Besides, it is widely used in Sufism; cf. Shah, Idries, this ed., 1991.

MAHAYANA VERSION OF THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

As we have seen, the Third Noble Truth is Awakening or *nirvana*, which according to the canonical texts of the First Promulgation and to the *Theravada* and *Vatsiputriya* schools of the *Hinayana*, alone is un compounded, unconditioned and unmade. In fact, those texts and schools claim that all samsaric phenomena are compounded, conditioned and made, insofar as it is clear at first sight that they exhibit the four characteristics of all that is conditioned or made listed by the Buddha: arising (Skt., *utpada*), disintegration (Skt., *vyaya*), subsistence and change (Skt., *sthityan-yathatva*).¹⁶⁰ Since according to these books and schools *nirvana* arises at some particular point, it is hard to understand how it may be said to be un compounded, unconditioned and unmade—which, as we have just seen, implies that it does not have a beginning or arising (*utpada*). (It must be noted that other schools of the *Hinayana* and the *Yogachara* School of the *Mahayana* posit several classes of unconditioned or unmade phenomena;¹⁶¹ however, it is not self-evident that the views of these schools, which it would be too long to consider here, be less disputable than the one considered in this paragraph.)

Some of the most important scriptures of the *Mahayana* disagree with the views concerning what is conditioned and what unconditioned that are common to the canonical texts of the First Promulgation and the *Theravada* and *Vatsiputriya* schools, and assert that all entities of both *samsara* and *nirvana* have a single nature, which is unconditioned and unborn. The soundest interpretation of these scriptures is that of *Mahamadhyamaka*, supreme among all *Madhyamaka* sub-schools, which agrees with the *Vajra* vehicles in holding that the conditioned experience of phenomena corresponding to *samsara* is an effect of *avidya* that veils the true, common nature of all phenomena of *samsara* and *nirvana*, of all subjects and all objects, and in general of all experiences—which is the un compounded, unmade, unconditioned, single Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*, inherent to which are all the aspect of Buddhahood and qualities of *nirvana*.¹⁶²

If this were not the case and the canonical texts of the First Promulgation and the *Theravada* and *Vatsiputriya* schools of the *Hinayana* expressed the definitive view as to what is conditioned and what unconditioned, the nature of reality would be inherently dual: the phenomena of *samsara* would have a conditioned, undesirable nature that by implication should be destroyed or somehow done away with, and the metaphenomena of *nirvana*¹⁶³ would have an intrinsically different, unconditioned, desirable one, which should be made to arise (and therefore, as noted above, seemingly would lack the first of the four characteristics of the unconditioned or unmade, which is the absence of arising). If *nirvana* had a beginning and had to be made to arise, it would be impermanent and thus could not be a definitive solution to the suffering of *samsara*;¹⁶⁴ it is a definitive solution

to it insofar as it consists in the reGnition (of) the unconditioned and unborn nature that is the true condition of everything, which has been perfectly manifest and actual since beginningless time as the Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*. (For a discussion of all of this, the reader is directed to Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)

Furthermore, as we have seen, the *Mahayana* and other “superior vehicles” do not conceive the *nirvana* that is the Third Truth as a mere cessation, for their aim is *anuttara samyak sambodhi* or “total unsurpassable Awakening,” which involves an active and effective wisdom that, *besides* unveiling the unconditioned and thus putting an end *in the individual* both to the delusion or error called *avidya* or *marigpa* and to the suffering or *duhkha* that issues from it, allows her or him to help all sentient beings to overcome both *avidya* and *duhkha*. And since the various vehicles have different aims, naturally they differ as to the methods to be applied in order to achieve their aims; in particular, in all “superior vehicles” the point is to apprehend nakedly and directly the unconditioned, unmade, original single nature of all that in *samsara* manifests as conditioned and made, thus transcending dualism and, in general, the delusion called *avidya*. In particular, the capacity to help others depends on the full recognition of the emptiness of phenomena that are not human beings required by the Mahayana, for otherwise the *scope* of one’s wisdom would be limited by the belief in the self-existence of those phenomena.¹⁶⁵

As we have seen, so far as we are affected by the basic delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa*, we experience ourselves as being separate, autonomous and substantial nuclei of consciousness at a distance from the continuum of absolute plenitude and completeness that is the single nature of all entities, as a result of which we experience the lack of plenitude and completeness that is a central element in the *duhkha* that is the First Noble Truth, and value all that we imagine may fill our lack. Contrariwise, Awake Ones, who do not feel they are nuclei of consciousness at a distance from our common, original condition of total plenitude and completeness (Dzogchen when its *katak* aspect is emphasized),¹⁶⁶ and who therefore are absolute plenitude and value, do not attribute any special value to whatever entity, activity or condition. When the Chinese emperor asked Sakya Pandita who was the richest person in Tibet, the Lama answered with the name of a *yogi* who lived naked in a cave in the mountains, whose only possessions were some roasted barley flour and a bed of moss: this *yogi* was free from the sensation of lack that is inherent in delusion. After a Nepalese disciple offered Guru Chöwang six Tibetan ounces of gold powder, the Master threw the powder into the air above a rushing stream, saying “what should I want gold for, when the whole world is gold for me?”¹⁶⁷ Thus it is not difficult to see that progress on the Path of Awakening would allow people to feel totally fulfilled and attain absolute plenitude in frugality, which is indispensable if our species is to survive its present predicament. In fact, Padmasambhava of Oddiyana said:ⁱ

A man is satisfied not by the quantity of food, but by the absence of greed.

We have also seen that, so far as we are affected by *avidya*, we take ourselves to be separate, autonomous and substantial nuclei of consciousness that, on the basis of our own selfish interests, or of a given set of values that is supposed to check these selfish interests and keep society from being a war of each against all,¹⁶⁸ must choose a conduct to adopt and then dualistically implement this choice. This is the root cause of evil, for, as

ⁱ Yeshe Tsogyäl, English, 1978.

we have seen, the illusion of being separate selves automatically begets selfishness; then the evil impulses inherent in selfishness must be contained, but the law of inverted effect causes our attempts to contain or destroy evil to reinforce it; etc. As we have also seen, it also gives rise to self-impediment, for the subject interferes with its subjectivity by establishing a link of being with the entity that is acting, which it takes as object; it judges the individual's performance and tries to control and correct it while it is carried out; etc. Contrariwise, Awake individuals *no longer* believe themselves to be nuclei of experience and agency separate from the flow of the single, true nature of all entities; therefore, they no longer control their behavior dualistically and thus are selfless channels allowing for the manifestation of the consummate flow of our original condition of total perfection (Dzogchen, when its lhundrub aspect is emphasized).¹⁶⁹ Since they are free both from selfishness and from the “reverse law” that causes beings to give rise to evil while trying to avert evil and give rise to good, their behavior is beneficial to all sentient beings.

Concerning the first of the above mentioned results of Awakening—the fact that the individual becomes an open channel for the unobstructed flow of the spontaneity of our true condition, and therefore her or his actions are consummately, unsurpassably skillful—it must be noted that, if one who has achieved this realization is experienced in art or craftsmanship, he or she will be able to produce incomparable works of art or handicrafts without being subject to the possibility of self-encumbering. The *Chuang-tzu* expresses this as follows:¹

Ch'ui the artisan was able to draw circles by hand better than with the compass. His fingers seemed to accommodate so easily to the thing on which he was working that he didn't need to focus his attention. His mental faculties thus remained one (i.e., integrated) and thus suffered no impediment.

If the above artisan had needed to focus his attention on the object he was working on, and on the hands he was working with, and had needed to use his attention to control his activity, like the centipede of the poem cited in the previous chapter, he would have suffered obstruction.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the one who has become firmly established in the Awake state, so as to become an unimpeded channel for the spontaneous flow of the selfless activities issuing from the true, single nature of all entities, will not be obstructed by self-consciousness even when he or she is observed by the most fastidious, critical, severe, respected and fearsome witnesses; if, as in the above example, such an individual is skillful in the arts or in craftsmanship, he or she will be able to produce masterpieces right before the latter's eyes.

Concerning the second of the above mentioned results of Awakening—the fact that we get rid both of the evil that issues from selfishness and of the further evil resulting from trying to contain the evil that issues from selfishness—the ex-president of India, S. Radhakrishnan, stated:ⁱⁱ

Laws and regulations are necessary for [common human beings]. But for those who have risen above their selfish egos... there is no possibility of evil doing in them... Till the spiritual life is won, the law of morality appears to be an external command which man has

ⁱ Giles, 1926, p. 242. Quoted in Watts, Alan W., 1956, p. 46. For a newer version see Watson, B. [trans.], 1968.

ⁱⁱ Radhakrishnan, S., 1923/1929, Vol. I, pp. 228-9.

to obey with effort and pain. But when the light is obtained it becomes the internal life of the spirit, working itself out unconsciously and spontaneously. The saint's action is an absolute surrender to the spontaneity of spirit, and is not an unwilling obedience to externally imposed laws. We have the free outpouring of an unselfish spirit that does not calculate the rewards of action or the penalties of omission.

Since the Awake Ones are fully aware that so long as we believe ourselves to be separate selves and experience ourselves as such we are possessed by selfishness, and know very well that our attempts to contain the ensuing evil do nothing but potentiate this evil, their priority is not to provide us with moral guidelines, but to help the unveiling in us of the universal, nondual, original condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection (Dzogchen), the spontaneity of which consummately responds to the needs of self and others, flawlessly accomplishing whatever is needed by both. Thus there can be no doubt that only progress on the Path of Awakening would give rise to a genuinely virtuous conduct—which, if generalized throughout our species, would allow it to enter a new Golden Age, Era of Perfection or Age of Truth.

The point is that the activities of the Awake Ones are what Taoism and *Ch'an* Buddhism have called *wei-wu-wei* or “action through nonaction:” a spontaneity free from self-consciousness and intentionality, which is consummately skillful insofar as it is not subject to the self-encumbering inherent in self-conscious, intentional action, and which, being free from selfishness and from the “reverse law” considered above, accomplishes the purpose of both self and others. This action by means of nonaction cannot be created or produced, for, rather than conditioned and made, it is unconditioned and unmade: it naturally flows when our original state of total completeness / plenitude and perfection (Dzogchen), which is uncompounded, unconditioned and unmade, is neither veiled nor obstructed by the basic delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa*.

To conclude, it must be clear by now that Awakening, being free of selfishness, is not subject to the short-sighted drive to appropriate what we think would benefit us, to destroy what we believe could harm us, and so on. Being characterized by Total Space-Time-Awareness, it does not involve the perceptual fragmentation illustrated by the story of the men and the elephant and the rest of the parables presented in the preceding chapter. Since, as remarked above, Awakening results in absolute plenitude no matter how frugal our way of life may be, generalized development on the Path of Awakening would remove the deepest causes of ecological crisis.

AWAKENING Vs TRANSPERSONAL COUNTERFEITS

In the brief story of Shakyamuni's life in the first chapter of this book we saw that the two teachers he adopted had developed the ability to enter into and dwell in states that are very easily mistaken for the Third Noble Truth, and that the would-be Buddha took his leave from them precisely because he discovered that not all that glittered was gold, and not all the results of yogic practices and spiritual meditations were the Awakening he sought. Thus, in order for Awakening not to be confused with conditioned samsaric states and other deeper absorptions that may be mistaken for it, it is necessary to show very precisely what these conditioned states are like, and how do they differ from Awakening, which is the uncaused, unconditioned unveiling of our uncompounded, unconditioned, original condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection. To this end, it is

imperative to distinguish between: (1) what Buddhists call “Awakening;” (2) those transpersonal states wherein neither is delusion actively functioning, nor is the state of rigpa (nondual Awake awareness, Presence or Truth) manifest—and that therefore pertain to neither *samsara* nor *nirvana*; and (3) the experiences of the transpersonal sphere that, being *produced* and therefore *conditioned*, and involving the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa, belong to *samsara*.

(1) The condition of Supreme Sanity that Buddhists call “Awakening” consists in the unveiling of our original condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection by means of the surpassing of all comprehension in terms of delusorily valued thoughts, no matter whether these thoughts be: (a) coarse (which are mental reproductions of sensory perceptions and which may be divided into two main categories: auditive, consisting in discursive thoughts, which are enunciated sequentially by “mentally pronouncing” chains of words, and which are mainly related to time; and visual [often in association with other senses], which are our mental images of objects of vision, and which are mainly related to space); (b) subtle or intuitive (which are comprehensions of essence taking place in a state of “mental muteness”—as for example when one knows a door to be a door without mentally saying to oneself, “This is a door”);¹⁷¹ or (c) “super-subtle” (in particular, the “directional threefold thought structure,” which gives rise to the illusion that there is an experience, someone who experiences and something that is experienced).¹⁷² However, this should not be misunderstood as meaning Awakening is the mere temporary cessation of all thoughts in a condition where awareness is inactive and speech and body are in repose; contrariwise, Awakening involves the roaring patency¹⁷³ of our true condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection, together with an absolute freedom of awareness to unselfconsciously and spontaneously manifest myriads of diverse actionless activities. In Dzogchen terms, Awakening may be said to manifest upon the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition of the nondual Awake self-awareness the Dzogchen teachings call rigpa, and this reGnition in its turn may be said to make this nondual awareness’ own face patent (rangngo shepaⁱ), so that the true nature of the Base is unconcealed in the manifestation of rigpa-qua-Path and, in the long run, of rigpa-qua-Fruit. As a result of this, the three aspects of the Base listed in the Dzogchen teachings¹⁷⁴ are effectively realized as the three kayas of Buddhahood and fully actualized as such (which, however, takes place sequentially, beginning with the realization of the ngowoⁱⁱ aspect of the Base as the *dharmakaya*), and there manifests an absolutely free, spontaneous activity of primordial awareness that does not fall into dualism.

(2) The neutral (lungmatenⁱⁱⁱ) states in which there is *avidya* or marigpa in the first of the senses the terms have in the threefold classification adopted here (that of the basic unawareness that arises when a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction [mongcha^{iv}] obscures rigpa’s inherent nondual self-awareness, preventing it from making patent its own face and hence from manifesting its all-liberating nature) and therefore the state of rigpa or Truth corresponding to *nirvana* is not manifest, but in which *avidya* or marigpa is not manifest in the second and third senses the terms have in the threefold classification adopted here (that of the active delusion that consists in taking the

ⁱ *Rang-ngo shes-pa.*

ⁱⁱ *Ngo-bo.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Lung-ma-bstan.*

^{iv} *rMongs-cha.*

insubstantial as substantial, the relative as absolute, the dependent as independent, what lacks value and importance as having inherent value and importance,¹⁷⁵ the unsatisfactory as suitable to provide satisfaction and so on; and that consisting in the inability to realize that we are under delusion) and therefore *samsara* is not active either. The Dzogchen teachings refer to these states in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active by the term “base-of-all,” or by phrases involving this term, such as “dimension of the base-of-all” (Tib., *kunzhi kham*ⁱ), “primordial, profound base-of-all” (*yedön kunzhi*ⁱⁱ), base-of-all carrying propensities (*bagchagkyi kunzhi*ⁱⁱⁱ), and so on. (The “neutral base-of-all” [*kunzhi lungmaten*^{iv}] does not manifest solely in absorptions like the ones referred to by the three preceding terms; it also recurs again and again in normal, everyday human experience, in which, however, it usually goes unnoticed). Such states are a pervasive medium in which the intentionality of mind (Tib., *mig*^v) does not yet operate and so strictly speaking in them there is no mind (Tib., *sem*^{vi}); therefore, they are likened to an egg (being comparable to the condition preceding the separation of the earth and the sky described in Bön and other ancient cosmogonies): in this sense, the base-of-all is compared to a situation in which the senses have not awakened to their objects, though *not* necessarily because the continuum of sensation out of which objects are singled out in developed samsaric experience be absent (as in the case of a person who is asleep or unconscious, to whom the sensory continuum of awake experience is not present): what is essential is that as yet there be no cognitive activity that may either take the sensory continuum as object, or actively function in order to single out segments of the continuum and perceive them as objects.¹⁷⁶ Since the states referred to by the term base-of-all are characterized by nonduality and nonconceptuality, Jigme Lingpa^{vii} (one of the greatest Dzogchen Masters of the second millennium CE) prophesied that in our time many yogis will *mistake* them for the *dharmakaya* (the Mind aspect of Buddhahood, which, as noted above, is the first level of Awakening on the Path of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*).¹⁷⁷

(3) Among the experiences of the transpersonal sphere that, being manifestations of the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa*, and being *produced* and as such conditioned, belong to *samsara*, it is important to highlight those that make up the “formless sphere” (*arupa loka* or *arupyadhatu*). These experiences—which are conditioned manifestations of *avidya* or *marigpa* in the three senses the Dzogchen classification adopted here gives these terms, and which according to the Buddhist teachings constitute the very summit of the conditioned, cyclic existence called *samsara*—are characterized by a considerable expansion of the individual’s focus of conscious attention and thus by an increased space-time-knowledge; therefore, they may be easily mistaken for the condition of Total Space-Time-Awareness that is called *nirvana*. However, even some experiences that do not involve the expansion of the focus of conscious attention and an increased space-time-knowledge—such as for example those of the sphere of form (*rupa loka* or *rupadhatu*) and those of the heavens of the higher regions of the sphere of desire (*kama loka* or *kamadhatu*)¹⁷⁸—often become the spurious aims of misguided spiritual practice.

ⁱ *Kun-gzhi’i kham*.

ⁱⁱ *Ye-don kun-gzhi*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Bag-chags-kyi kun-gzhi*

^{iv} *Kun-gzhi lung-ma-bstan*.

^v *dMigs*.

^{vi} *Sems*.

^{vii} *Jigs-med gLing-pa*.

In terms of the general, common psycho-cosmology of Buddhism, most of the samsaric experience of sentient beings belongs to the *kama loka*, *kamadhatu* or “sphere of sensuality,” which is characterized by the distinction between figure and ground that results from the limitation of attention to one segment of the sensory field (which is perceived as figure, while the rest of the field is engulfed in a kind of “penumbra of attention” and thus becomes background), and by unceasing emotional reactions of the mental subject toward its objects whereby the former tries to assert and confirm its own existence as an absolutely true and extremely important entity. Thus, it is clear that this is a sphere conditioned by the passions, in which pleasure is of the sensual kind. And, in fact, by intensifying sensual pleasure and making it more stable, some beings of this sphere climb to the higher regions of the *kamadhatu* or sphere of sensuality, establishing themselves in the “realm of the gods of sensuality.”

The sphere that according to the common Buddhist view is immediately higher, and which in its entirety belongs to the realms of the gods, is the *rupa loka*, *rupadhatu* or “sphere of form,” the characteristics of which are to some extent comparable to those of the experiences of aesthetic appreciation considered in a previous chapter. This sphere, which as stated in the Dzogchen teachings develops through grasping at one of the first stages in the development of *samsara*,¹⁷⁹ also may be entered as the result of deviations in the practice, such as developing attachment to visualizations or other concentrations involving the figure / ground distinction. Like the sphere of sensuality, that of form is characterized by the distinction between figure and background that results from the limitation of attention to one segment of the sensory field (which is perceived as figure, while the rest of the field is engulfed in a kind of “penumbra of attention” and thus comes to constitute the ground). However, unlike the sphere of sensuality, this one is not characterized by the ubiquitous manifestation of the passions. (On the contrary, in advanced Dzogchen practices the dynamic of this sphere may be the key catalyst for optimizing the spontaneous liberation of the passions, for it has been rightly said that “The sphere of form is an ocean of vibration that becomes ever more turbulent as one moves away from its peaceful profundities; sensitive to the slightest tremor of pain or displeasure, the impulses [that are inherent to this sphere] formulate their own antidote to disharmony.”ⁱ However, this potential function of the sphere of form can only lead to spontaneous liberation in duly prepared individuals.)

The sphere that the common Buddhist view deems highest (and which it views as the highest region of the realms of the gods) is the *arupa loka*, *arupyadhatu* or “formless sphere,”¹⁸⁰ which is reached when, while we are conditioned by the delusory valuation or absolutization of the contents of thoughts at the root of basic human delusion, the scope of our consciousness is enlarged, and so there manifest experiences of the transpersonal sphere characterized by greater space-time-awareness.¹⁸¹ As a result, rather than attaining the state of supreme sanity that Buddhists call Awakening, we obtain a conditioned, impermanent experience of the “higher realms” of cyclic existence or *samsara*, the core of which continues to be *avidya*-*marigpa* in all of the three senses the term has in the threefold classification adopted here.

The point is that the progressive panoramification of consciousness in deluded individuals, which causes the scope of their attention and their space-time-knowledge to widen, at some point may cause them to feel that the figure-background distinction has

ⁱ Padmasambhava and others, 1973, Italian, 1977, p15.

collapsed, and thus to obtain transpersonal experiences of seeming oneness and totality which are conditioned by the delusory valuation of intuitive or subtle thoughts and of the “directional threefold thought structure.” Since the mental subject will tend to identify (so to say¹⁸²) with the pseudo-totality that is perceived,¹⁸³ it will obtain the illusion that it has gone beyond the subject-object duality. Insofar as these transpersonal experiences cause delusion and *samsara* to become quite pleasant and free from conflict for a considerable length of time, so long as deluded individuals dwell in the formless sphere it will be hardly possible for them to overcome delusion and *samsara*—and if on the top they believe they have overcome *samsara* and attained *nirvana*, it will be absolutely impossible for them to move from *samsara* to *nirvana*.

The supreme sanity that results from successful Buddhist practice involves not being conditioned by any of the three possible types of delusory valued thought that may manifest—coarse, subtle/intuitive, or super-subtle. In terms of the image used by Alfred Korzybski,ⁱ the point is not to confuse the maps consisting of thoughts and chains of thoughts with the territory of the given—and, therefore, not to believe that a given thought or chain of thoughts is absolutely correct and true concerning what it interprets, and that the opposite thought or chain of thoughts is absolutely incorrect and false. In particular, the realized practitioner of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* simply remains in the state of rigpa or Truth that makes patent and functional the all-liberating single gnosis (chikshe kundrölⁱⁱ) of Dzogchen, so that delusorily valued thoughts of all possible types liberate themselves spontaneously as they arise. If the individual is not fully realized and at some point thoughts are taken as object and therefore fail to liberate themselves spontaneously, he or she will look into their essence or ngowoⁱⁱⁱ (which is the very *dharmakaya* that she or he has already become familiar with¹⁸⁴), which will provide the opportunity for those thoughts to liberate themselves simultaneously with the mind perceiving them, in the bare unveiling of the state of rigpa or Truth. In particular, if a Dzogchen practitioner who is not yet fully realized enters the conditioned transpersonal sphere, for example one of the *arupa* lokas, he or she will instantaneously realize that his or her experience is tinged by thoughts, and thus will recognize these thoughts, upon which these will instantly liberate themselves spontaneously in the patency of the state of rigpa or Truth.

Therefore, the experiences of whichever level or realm among those described by transpersonal and integral psychologists such as Stanislav Grof, Ken Wilber and so on, will be instances of delusion if they are tinged by discursive, intuitive or super-subtle delusory valued thoughts. So far transpersonal and integral psychology do not seem to have distinguished the three possibilities among which it was shown earlier in this chapter that it is necessary to discriminate, which are: (1) Awakening or *nirvana*, wherein one is not conditioned by any of the possible types of delusorily valued thought; (2) states wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active; and (3) samsaric, thought-tinged transpersonal experiences of cosmic oneness and so on resulting from a partial enlargement of the scope of conscious awareness (i.e., of space-time-knowledge). Furthermore, transpersonal and related psychologies tend to take so-called peak experiences as ends in themselves, and therefore may lead spiritual seekers to pursue samsaric, thought-tinged transpersonal highs that then are succeeded by lows, or to

ⁱ Korzybski, Alfred, 2d. ed., 1941.

ⁱⁱ *gCik-shes kun-grol*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ngo-bo*.

pursue states wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active. In particular, as shown while considering the First Noble Truth, in thought-tinged, samsaric transpersonal states, the delusory identification with a subtle, intuitive conceptualization of oneness, or with a concatenation of discursive thoughts such as “all is One,” etc.,¹⁸⁵ may give rise to pleasant sensations that cause the individual to adhere to those thoughts, making it almost impossible for him or her to recognize *samsara* as such. It is therefore possible that the individual may succeed in making such conditioned states stable and come to believe that by so doing he or she has gone beyond the ego—in which case he or she might go so far as to attain what Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche called “the totally demonic state of complete egohood.” In fact, in order to free ourselves from *samsara*, rather than climbing peaks and clinging to them, we need to have direct access to the unconditioned “all-liberating single gnosis” in which all samsaric, thought-tinged experiences—including peaks, plateaus, valleys and pits—liberate themselves spontaneously upon arising.

If individuals overcome the identification (so to say¹⁸⁶) with the limited entities designated by their names, yet come to identify (so to say) with something far more extensive, though they may believe that they are going beyond the ego, in truth they will be *enlarging and reinforcing their egos*.¹⁸⁷ This is precisely what happens in the four realms or contemplations of the *arupyadhātu* or formless sphere. (1) In the lowest, which is the *ākāśhanāntya-samāpatti*ⁱ or “infinitude of space,” the distinction figure-ground is totally overcome; all that previously was perceived as entities is perceived as limitless space, beyond obstructions or variety, and one identifies (so to say) with this apparent infinitude of space, taking pride in this grandiose identity. (2) In the *viññānanāntya-samāpatti*ⁱⁱ or “infinitude of consciousness,” which results from perceiving the previous state as gross and surpassing it by means of stabilizing meditation, the meditator dwells on the idea that the consciousness perceiving the apparent infinitude is limitless and peaceful, and apprehends everything as pure, limitless, undifferentiated consciousness, identifying (so to say) with what seems to be an infinitude of consciousness and taking pride in this lofty identity. (3) In the *ākimchāntya-samāpatti*ⁱⁱⁱ or “infinitude of nothingness,” which results from perceiving the previous state as gross and surpassing it by cultivating a mental state in which only nothingness appears, there is no idea of space, of consciousness or of any other such entity, yet the directional threefold thought structure is still delusorily valued, and so one identifies (so to say) with the seeming infinitude of nothingness that appears as object, taking pride in the ensuing identity. (4) In the highest formless realm, which is the *naivasamjñānasamjñāyatana*^{iv} or “infinitude of neither recognition nor non-recognition,” also called “peak of existence” (Skt., *bhavagra*), and which results from perceiving the previous state as gross and surpassing it by transcending discrimination, even of the subtlest kind, between nothingness and not-nothingness, recognition and non-recognition, etc., one has not gone beyond the delusory valuation of subtle thoughts and of the directional threefold thought structure, and hence one identifies (so to say) with the subtle concept appearing as object that establishes the impossibility to conceptualize one’s identity in any possible way, taking pride in the ensuing, apparently supreme identity. As a realm in which one takes rebirth, this “peak of

ⁱ Tib., *Nam-mkha’ mtha’-yas skye-mched*.

ⁱⁱ Tib., *rNam-shes mtha’-yas skye-mched*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tib., *Ci-yang med-pa’i skye-mched*.

^{iv} Tib., *’Du-shes-med ’du-shes med-min skye-mched*.

existence” is said to involve extremely long lifespans in which one perceives nothing unpleasant and discrimination is only of the subtlest kind. The length of this lifespan is due to the fact that, of all conditioned states, this is the one in which space-time-awareness is largest: it is insofar as time is so large, that one’s lifetime is experienced as being exceedingly long.

In short, unlike other systems of psychology, transpersonal psychology agrees with Buddhism that sanity or mental health cannot lie in “normality,” understood as relatively conflict-free functional adaptation to the social pseudo-reality. However, Buddhism is crystal clear concerning the fact that true sanity consists in the surpassing of *samsara* and the attainment of *nirvana*, and thus would strongly disagree with those naïve, unsophisticated systems of transpersonal psychology that equate sanity with non-characterized transpersonal experience. The fact that neither transpersonal experiences within the bounds of *samsara*, nor transpersonal experiences that are beyond the bounds of *samsara* but are not *nirvana*, could be taken to constitute true sanity, simply cannot be emphasized too much. The *Dzogchen Kunzang Lama*ⁱ reads:ⁱⁱ

By practicing a meditative absorption in which no sense of good and evil obtains and conceiving this state as liberation, they are born as gods of the sphere beyond recognition and lack of recognition and stay in this absorption for many great aeons. But when the *karma* that gave rise to this state becomes exhausted, on account of their erroneous view [of conceiving a passing meditative absorption as liberation], they are reborn in the lower realms of existence. Hence this state is an unfavorable condition for practicing the *Dharma*.

Dwelling in such “highs” causes us to become disaccustomed to the discomfort and suffering inherent to lower realms, and so when the “fuel” consisting of the actions and habits—that is, the *karma*—that allowed us to climb to the highest *samsaric* realm is exhausted, or when the secondary causes or contributory conditions that allowed us to remain therein are no longer present, and therefore we “fall” to lower spheres involving a smaller space-time-knowledge and coarser sensations and thoughts to which we are no longer accustomed, we will reject these so frantically that we might well give rise to the experience of one of the most painful realms of existence. The “Great Fifth” Dalai Lama wrote:ⁱⁱⁱ

The *King of Meditations Sutra* (*Samadhirajasutra*) says: “Though they cultivate those concentrations [of the peak of existence and so forth], they do not destroy the discrimination of self. Therefore, the afflictions return, and they are thoroughly disturbed—as in the case of the cultivation of the concentrations by Udraka Ramaputra.” Through the force of not having abandoned the conception of inherent existence, they are disturbed again by the afflictions, as in the case of the Forder (*Tirthaka*) Udraka Ramaputra. They again fall into a consciousness of lower states. Therefore, how could it be that trainees who

ⁱ *rDzogs-chen kun-bzang bla-ma*.

ⁱⁱ This quote from the *rDzogs-chen kun-bzang bla-ma* was taken from Capriles, Elías, 1977. Since the precise location of the extract in the original text and the latter’s data were not provided in Capriles, Elías, 1977 (which was not written according to any established academic methodology), they are not presently available. The same quote has been reproduced in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

ⁱⁱⁱ Fifth Dalai Lama, English 1974. Quoted in Capriles, Elías, 1977, and then reproduced in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

are beings of greatest capacity would seek worldly special insight that only suppresses manifest afflictions?

In fact, an individual's ascent to "higher realms" through application of spiritual methods or other activities or circumstances has been compared to that of an arrow shot upwards. Since the arrow climbs by the impetus of the limited energy of the action of shooting and since the force of gravity attracts it downwards, sooner or later it will have to fall. *Ch'an* (Zen) Buddhist Master Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh wrote:ⁱ

"When the force that drives the arrow is spent
it will fall back to the ground
and its ascent will only have created adverse *karma*
for the times to come."

In Tibet, the individual who, by means of the application of spiritual techniques, ascended to the "formless sphere," was compared to a bird taking flight whose shadow grew in size as it rose, but which eventually would have to come down. Nowadays, we can replace the bird with an airplane and note that the plane's shadow represents the understanding of oneself in terms of (coarse or subtle) delusorily valued thoughts that causes one to become a particular *ego* or "I." The plane rises and stays up in the air thanks to the fuel that feeds its motors (the actions at the base of the relevant wholesome habits) and the contributory circumstances that allow it to stay up in the air (such as an especially calm environment, the admiration of disciples, the amplitude of personal fame, the absence of adverse opinions, etc.—and, in some cases, even objects or substances). As the plane ascends, its shadow becomes larger and less distinct, until, having reached a given altitude, it seems to have disappeared: as we ascend to the peak of conditioned existence, our delusory sense-of-self expands to embrace the entire cosmos and finally at some point appears to dissolve as we dwell on the idea of the impossibility of defining the condition with which we identify, causing us to have the illusion of "being someone who has transcended all notion-of-self." However, though the airplane's shadow (the individual's sense-of-self) has remained invisible for some time, it has never ceased to exist. Since the aircraft cannot keep flying indefinitely—for it carries a limited quantity of fuel and at some time the favorable conditions will be replaced by unfavorable ones—sooner or later it will have to descend and, once more, be confined to the tight limits of its narrow shadow. Since individuals who "descend" from partially panoramic states have become used to their immensity, when they find themselves once again bound within the narrow limits to which they were confined before ascension, very likely they will experience claustrophobia, to which they will react with forceful rejection. Since the rejection of experience transforms whatever sensations are present into pain, and since the individual coming down from partially panoramic states is likely to have a quite high energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt. *kundalini*; Tib. *thig le*ⁱⁱ),¹⁸⁸ he or she is likely to undergo a hellish experience.

ⁱ Yoka Daishi (Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh)/Taisen Deshimaru, Spanish 1981. Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh was one of the five spiritual heirs of Hui-neng (Cantonese, Wei-lang; Japanese, Eno), the sixth patriarch of *Ch'an* or *Zen* in China. (Another Japanese name of Yung-chia Hsüan-chüeh is Yoka Genkaku).

ⁱⁱ *thig le*.

The fuel that sustains the spiritual “high” is repeated action (Skt., *karma*ⁱ), which establishes wholesome habits or attitudes. Buddhists designate it with the Sanskrit word *hetu*ⁱⁱ, meaning “principal cause,” and compare it with the seed from which a plant sprouts and develops. In their turn, contributory conditions (Skt., *pratyaya*ⁱⁱⁱ)—which, as remarked above, include the environment and so on, and in some cases may even include the action of objects or substances—are compared to light, moisture, earth, heat, etc. When the fuel is used up or conditions change—in terms of the metaphor, when the airplane fuel is spent or when atmospheric or mechanical conditions make continuing the flight impossible—the individual will again have to face the narrow limits of her or his “shadow.”¹⁸⁹

It is for this reason that it was previously stated that the solution to our problems could not lie in simply avoiding bad actions (*karma*) and accumulating good ones. Whenever we act in an intentional, self-conscious manner, our consciousness for an instant takes as its object the entity that is acting (the individual with its aspects of body, voice, mind, qualities and activities), accepting it when, according to the synthetic moral criterion conditioning the individual and to his or her natural sensitivity, the action is “good,” rejecting it when it is “bad,” and remaining indifferent when it is “neutral.”¹⁹⁰ This is what causes the lie detector to work: when the person lies, for an instant consciousness rejects the lying self, and this rejection produces a subtle contraction that is registered by the machine.¹⁹¹ Every act that, being considered bad, causes consciousness to reject the agent, will establish propensities for rejection—which, insofar as rejection begets pain, are propensities for future experiences of pain (which, when the necessary contributory conditions are present, will certainly give rise to hellish rebirths¹⁹²). Furthermore, all kinds of intentional, self-conscious action affirm and sustain the illusion of a separate agent-perceiver that is the core of the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa, maintaining *samsara*; since it is impossible for the apparently separate agent-perceiver to accept experience indefinitely, acceptance sooner or later will give rise to rejection, and so every ascent to “higher realms” will result in a later descent to “lower” ones. This may allow us to clearly understand why the definitive uprooting of suffering is not achieved by abandoning bad actions (*karma*) and accumulating good ones, but by overcoming action itself—or in other words, by transcending all *karma*.

The same applies to helping others, which is the aim of practice in the *Mahayana*: so long as we are not Awake, our capacity to help others will be insignificant. Elsewhere I have quoted the following stanza by Thogme Zangpo:^{iv}

The gods of this world are not yet free from sorrow,
for caught in *samsara*, some day they must fall.
If they're bound as we are, how can they protect us?
How can someone in prison free anyone else?

ⁱ Tib., *Las*.

ⁱⁱ Tib., *rGyu*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tib., *rKyen*.

^{iv} Quoted in Capriles, Elias, 1977 (the data of the text from which the quotation was taken were lost). Then cited in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH AND THE THREE MAIN PATHS OF BUDDHISM

The Fourth Noble Truth, which, as we have seen, is the Path allowing the individual to overcome the first two Truths and attain the Third, is explained in terms of the renowned “Eightfold Noble Path,”ⁱ consisting of the following eight elements: (1) right view (Skt., *samyagdrishti*; Tib., yangdakpai tawaⁱⁱ), consisting in adherence to key Buddhist concepts such as the Four Noble Truths, dependent origination, cause-and-effect and so on, and in the uprooting of all wrong views; (2) right thought (Skt., *samyaksamkalpa*; Tib., yangdakpai tokpaⁱⁱⁱ), consisting in cultivation of a mental attitude centered in following the Buddhist Path to its final destination; (3) right speech (Skt., *samyagvak*; Tib., yangdakpai ngag^{iv}), consisting in avoiding harsh words, lying, slander and gossip, and cultivating their opposites; (4) right disciplined behavior (Skt., *samyakkarmanta*; Tib., yangdakpai lekyi ta^v), consisting in acting in accordance with whatever precepts one has taken on; (5) right livelihood (Skt., *samyagajiva*; Tib., yangdakpai tsowa^{vi}), consisting in the avoidance of occupations harmful to beings; (6) right effort (Skt., *samyagvyayama*; Tib., yangdakpai tsölwa^{vii}), consisting in doing good and avoiding evil, adopting a mind-set aiming at liberation from *samsara*, and implementing the practices prescribed toward this aim; (7) right presence, recollectedness or mindfulness (Skt., *samyaksmriti*; Tib., yangdakpai tenpa^{viii}), consisting in maintaining constant awareness and presence of mind and regulating one’s behavior by it; and (8) right meditative absorption (Skt., *samyaksamadhi*; Tib., yangdakpai tingngedzin^{ix}), consisting in the good capacity to fix the mind on an object resulting from the previous aspects, which should allow one to develop the four absorptions of the *rupa loka* or *rupadhatu* and, finally, attain liberation.

Considering the Path in general rather than the above eight aspects (which, *if taken literally*, apply quite precisely to the Path of renunciation of the *Sutrayana*, but not to the other two Paths which will be considered later on), it must be noted that the

ⁱ Skt., *ashtangika marga* or *aryashtanga marga*; Pali, *atthangika magga* or *ariya atthanga magga*; Tib., ‘*phags pa’i lam yan lag brgyad*.

ⁱⁱ *Yang-dag-pa’i lta-ba*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Yang-dag-pa’i rtog-pa*.

^{iv} *Yang-dag-pa’i ngag*.

^v *Yang-dag-pa’i las-kyi mtha’*.

^{vi} *Yang-dag-pa’i ’tsho-ba*.

^{vii} *Yang-dag-pa’i rtsol-ba*.

^{viii} *Yang-dag-pa’i dran-pa*.

^{ix} *Yang-dag-pa’i ting-nge-’dzin*.

Theravada asserts that *nirvana* is the only unconditioned and unborn *dharma*, and hence is not attainable through building, constructing, producing or applying conditioning practices. In this context, one can understand why Buddhaghosha's *Atthasalini*, which belongs to the *Theravada*, contrasts the path followed by counterfeiters (which in Judeo-Christian lore is comparable to *building* the tower of Babel in order to reach Heaven), with the Path of dismantling what is made and conditioned. In fact, the text clearly tells us that the way to demolish birth and death, so that we may become firmly established in the timeless sphere of the unborn, uncreated and indestructible, which is *nirvana*, is through *undoing* all that is made and conditioned and therefore belongs to *samsara*, "by bringing about a deficiency in those conditions which tend to produce birth and death:"ⁱ

While healthy attitudes and meditative practices ranging over the three samsaric spheres [which are that of sensuality, that of form and that of formlessness] build up and make grow birth and death in a never-ending circle and hence are called building-up practices, it is not so with this meditation. Just as if a man were to erect a wall eighteen cubits high, while another man were to take a hammer and to break down and to demolish any part as it gets erected, so also this meditation sets about to break down and to demolish death and rebirth that have been built up by healthy attitudes and meditative practices ranging over the three worlds, by *bringing about a deficiency in those conditions which tend to produce birth and death*, and therefore this meditation is called "the tearing down one" (*apachayagami*).

The *Mahayana* perfectly agrees with the thesis according to which *nirvana* is not to be constructed, built or produced, for then it would be another conditioned state, and therefore subscribes to the notion that the core of the Path could by no means lie in *producing* states through training in meditative practices, in *producing* qualities through imitation, and so on. However, the *Mahamadhyamaka* School, and even more so the Sudden *Mahayana* (Ch'an or Zen) and the *Vajra* vehicles (and in particular Dzogchen *Atiyoga*), go far beyond the *Theravada* and insist that *nirvana* cannot be attained by means of action at all, for the cause-effect relation gives rise to and sustains the conditioned and made.

As we have seen, according to the Promulgations that make up the doctrinal basis of the Wider Vehicle it is not only *nirvana* that is unmade and unconditioned; the true nature of all phenomena of *samsara* is equally unmade and unconditioned, but the delusion called *avidya* causes us to have illusory conditioned experiences of what in itself is unconditioned and unmade, thereby giving rise to the wheel of suffering that is *samsara*. In particular, according to *Mahamadhyamaka*, Buddhahood is not something that arises upon Awakening; contrariwise, for all of beginningless time it has been perfectly manifest and actual with its three kayas and the totality of the qualities of Awakening, as the Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*, which is concealed in *samsara* and evident in *nirvana*.

Thus in terms of *Mahamadhyamaka*, and especially of the *Vajra* Vehicles, the Path must necessarily consist in discovering the nirvanic, uncreated, unconditioned and unmade Base of everything, by *seeing through* the spurious, produced, created, born and conditioned experiences characteristic of *samsara*, and thus freeing ourselves from their grip on us (which to some extent could be compared to freeing ourselves from the grip of

ⁱ Attributed to Buddhaghosha, *Atthasalini*; in Guenther, Herbert V., 1957, 2d. Ed. 1974.

a nightmare by recognizing it to be only a dream). This contradicts the view of the *Theravada*, according to which only *nirvana* is unmade and unconditioned, so that it would be impossible to discover the unmade and unconditioned by apprehending the true nature of the phenomena of *samsara*. However, the view of *Mahamadhyamaka* also implies that, as the *Atthasālinī* rightly asserted, a pivotal element of the Path consists in bringing about a deficiency in those conditions necessary for producing birth and death, for impairing the mechanisms that produce the conditioned and made is the very key to seeing *through* the conditioned and made, *into* its unconditioned and unmade nature. This is what Shantideva was implying when, in his *Bodhicaryavatara*, he compared the all-pervading suffering of *samsara* to a hair, the normal individual to the palm of a hand and the *bodhisattva* or individual *en route* to Awakening to the eyeball, and noted that in the palm of the hand the hair can remain undetected indefinitely, but that in the eyeball, where its presence becomes evident and unbearable, it cannot be left for long.

It was noted above that the *Mahamadhyamaka* School, and even more so the Sudden *Mahayana* (*Ch'an* or *Zen*) and the *Vajra* vehicles (and in particular Dzogchen *Atiyoga*), go far beyond the *Theravada* and insist that *nirvana* cannot be attained by means of action, for the cause-effect relation gives rise to and sustains the conditioned and made. In fact, as remarked at the end of the last chapter, intentional, self-conscious action, insofar as it affirms and sustains the illusion of a separate agent-perceiver that is the very core of the delusion called *avidya*, maintains *samsara*: this is why the definitive uprooting of suffering necessarily involves going beyond action, or, in other words, transcending *karma*. It was also noted that *action* is by definition *made* (it is something we *do*) and *conditioned* (when we act we are conditioned by our *karma*); that it is the main *cause* (Skt., *hetu*) that, given a set of contributory conditions (Skt., *pratyaya*), will *produce* an effect—which, being produced, necessarily will be *conditioned* and *made* (this applies to whatever psychological states may be produced in this way). Since the *Theravada* is not aware of these facts, which are extraneous to its view, the image that Buddhaghosha chose to illustrate a pivotal element of the Path was that of actively and intentionally destroying what, being built and conditioned, was spurious. Therefore, though the *Mahamadhyamaka* School, the Sudden *Mahayana* (*Ch'an* or *Zen*) and the *Vajra* vehicles would agree to Buddhaghosha's assertion that *nirvana* cannot be built or constructed, they would by no means agree to presenting the undoing of *samsara* as a process based on continuous action on the part of the spurious mental subject.

Why using action in order to eliminate delusion will maintain delusion, may be clearly illustrated by the story of how Hui-neng (Cantonese, Wei-lang; Japanese, Eno) became the sixth patriarch of *Ch'an* Buddhism in China. The fifth patriarch, Hun-jen, had already recognized Hui-neng's qualities; however, beside being a newcomer, the latter was an illiterate woodcutter and a "barbarian" from Kwangtung (Guangdong), and therefore it would have been very dangerous for his safety—as well as for his own development on the Path—if he had celebrated his realization from the very outset of their relationship. Thus he dismissed the statement of realization by which Hui introduced himself and sent him to work in the kitchen, taking good care that no one would come to know the newcomer already had some realization and was on his way to becoming an outstanding practitioner. When the time came for the fifth patriarch to establish his succession, he called for a poetry contest, saying that the winner would obtain the patriarchy. The poem by Shen-hsiu, the most renowned scholar and meditator

in the monastery, was praised so profusely by Hun-jen that nobody else dared to compete against him. Since Hui-neng was illiterate, he had been unable either to participate in the contest or to read the poem of the erudite monk; consequently, so that the future sixth patriarch would become aware of its contents, Hun-jen asked for it to be written on a wall and for everyone to recite it. The poem said:ⁱ

Our body is the *bodhi*-tree;
a brilliant mirror is our mind.
Keep cleaning the mirror to guarantee
that no dust its spotlessness will blind.

Upon hearing Shen-hsiu's poem, Hui-neng knew the author still had not reached the level of realization of the fifth patriarch, and found himself forced to reply with a poem that demonstrated that, even though the patriarch still would not recognize him owing to the danger from the envy and jealousy of the scholars in the face of the success of a barbarian, illiterate woodcutter, he had a far more correct understanding of the Path than the renowned scholar-monk. His reply read:ⁱⁱ

There has never been a *bodhi*-tree,
nor has there been a mirror-mind;
since everything is substance-free
no dust our true nature may blind!

The point is that each and every action of the spurious subject that appears to be a separate and autonomous source of thought and action affirms and sustains the illusion of its existence, and so if the action of cleaning the mirror is to be carried out ceaselessly, the subject will maintain itself endlessly, and the true condition will continue to be concealed forever. Furthermore, if we try to remove something, it is because we believe it truly exists, and to the extent that we endeavor to remove it, we confirm and maintain the illusion of its existence. Consequently, the effects of Shen-hsiu's proposal would be like those of cleaning a mirror with a dirty rag: the more we clean it, the dirtier it will become.

In his turn, Hui-neng proposed using emptiness as an antidote to the delusion consisting in taking the mental subject and its objects to be self-existent—which is a typically *Mahayana* strategy that does not correspond either to the View or the Path of Dzogchen. In terms of the example of the mirror, the strategy of the Semdeⁱⁱⁱ series of Dzogchen teachings consists in urging us to reGnize all reflections and apparent taints in it (extensive objects having color and form, the mental subject that is not extensive and that possesses neither color nor form, and even the passions that the Path of renunciation considers as poisons to be eliminated) to be “reflections that manifest clearly without existing anywhere, outwardly or inwardly,”^{iv} yet to manifest as the play / display of the mirror itself, which as such do not have a nature different from the latter, of which they are not at a distance, and thus realize the true condition of both the mirror and the

ⁱ This is a free rendering of the poem, made for it to rhyme.

ⁱⁱ This is also a free rendering of the poem, made for it to rhyme; the original said that, since the mirror is void, the dust has nowhere to alight.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Sems-sde*.

^{iv} Longchen Rabjam (2001), p. 156.

reflections and stains, which is categorized as primordially pure (katakⁱ) and spontaneously perfect (lhundrubⁱⁱ). In turn, in the Menngagdeⁱⁱⁱ series of Dzogchen teachings, we look into whatever thought is being delusorily valued and reGnize its unconditioned nature, which at the outset of the Path unveiled in Direct Introduction (see Part Two of this book); since this nature (is) the all-liberating single gnosis (chikshe kundröl) of Dzogchen, its reGnition automatically results in the spontaneous liberation of the delusorily valued thoughts that had been conditioning our experience.¹⁹³

Another *Ch'an* (*Zen*) story that illustrates why true spiritual realization cannot be the result of action or in any way be *produced* is that of the dialog between Ma-tsu (in Japanese, Baso Doitsu), who at the time was still an ordinary practitioner, and *Ch'an* Master Huai-jang, his future teacher:^{iv}

Ma was sitting in meditation when Jang arrived and asked him what the aim of sitting in meditation was. Ma replied:

“To become a Buddha.”

Jang picked up a tile and began to polish it. When Ma asked what he was doing, he answered:

“I am making a mirror.”

Ma asked:

“And how could polishing a tile make a mirror?”

Jang replied:

“And how could one become a Buddha by sitting in meditation?”

The principle behind the above examples may be expressed in the renowned words of the *Surangama Sutra*:^v

If the causal basis is false, its fruit will be false, and the search for the Buddha's Awakening will lead to failure.

Though the *Mahayana* is a causal vehicle (*Hetuyana*) and the *sutra* is making its point in terms of cause (“the causal basis”) and effect (“its fruit”), from the standpoint of *Mahamadhyamaka* and of the Sudden *Mahayana* the *sutra*'s statement may be understood as warning us that activities and so on, which are *conditioned* and *made*, and that in their turn *condition* and *produce*, cannot give rise to *nirvana*, universally recognized to be *unconditioned* and *unmade*. In fact, whatever fruit may be borne by the conditioned and made will necessarily be spurious and false. Therefore the Fruit-based vehicles (*Phalayana*), in which the Fruit is not sought as the effect of a cause, but as the development of an initial, uncaused realization of the unconditioned and unmade nature of all reality, are a more effective way to attain an authentic result. However, most effective and direct is the vehicle that is wholly beyond the cause-effect relation and that as such cannot be considered to be based either on *hetu* or cause or on *phala* or Fruit: the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, in which realization is attained through the repeated, spontaneous dissolution (i.e., “liberation”) of the apparently separate, illusory nucleus of thought,

ⁱ *Ka-dag*.

ⁱⁱ *Lhun-grub*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Man-ngag-sde*; Skt., *upadesha*.

^{iv} Adapted from Suzuki, D. T., French 1940/1943, 1972 (vol. I), pp. 277-8, and Watts, A. W., 1956.

^v Luk, Charles (Upashaka Lü Kuan Yu), translator, 1973.

perception and action, rather than as an effect of the latter's actions.¹⁹⁴ In fact, as implied by the whole of the above, all that is conditioned may be produced by creating the main cause and arranging the contributory conditions, but Awakening, *qua* unconditioned realization of the unconditioned nature, can only result from the spontaneous liberation of delusion, which can neither be created nor arranged. Dudjom Rinpocheⁱ wrote that during the Second Promulgation of the transmitted precepts, Shakyamuni did not reveal the structure of the fundamental reality, though he did extensively teach the inconceivable, abiding nature [consisting in the dharmakaya's primordial emptiness] without referring to elaborately conceived symbols, and that during the Third Promulgation, though he did reveal the structure of the fundamental reality, he did not teach the characteristic Path through which it is actualized. In fact, the Path through which the structure of the fundamental reality is actualized is that of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*.

After the explanations in the last chapter and those provided so far in this chapter, the fact that entering the transpersonal sphere cannot give rise to the true, absolute sanity Buddhism calls Awakening must have become crystal clear. Clinging to a seemingly limitless condition that appears to embrace the whole universe would prove that one is under the yoke of the delusory valuation and absolutization of thought: since in nontranspersonal states this delusory valuation and absolutization most of the time produces a greater or lesser degree of pain, one tries to elude this pain by clinging to the transpersonal sphere. Nothing like this happens when one is no longer subject to the delusory valuation and absolutization of thought, without which no possible experience whatsoever would involve suffering—nor is there the conception of an “I” that must elude suffering.

True sanity and freedom that cannot be hampered lie in going beyond the delusory valuation-absolutization of thoughts that otherwise would give rise to the experiences of the different realms. No matter what type of experience we face or what conditions we find ourselves in, we must not allow delusorily valued thoughts to take hold of us or carry us away—whether these are discursive thoughts that may link up and trap us in a circle of confusion, passion and delusion; intuitive thoughts such as those that play their role in sensory perception; or the “directional threefold thought structure” at the root of the illusory subject-object duality. As we will see in Part Two of this book, the moment practitioners of Tekchöⁱⁱ (the first level of practice in the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagdeⁱⁱⁱ series of Dzogchen teachings) notice that they have been deceived by a thought and are facing a conditioned experience, they look right into the thought that is present at the moment in order to See into its unmade and unconditioned nature, thereby creating the conditions for the spontaneous liberation of that thought in the unveiling of the *nondual, all-liberating single gnosis* that is the true, unthinkable, unmade and unconditioned nature of our own awareness (i.e., of our cognitive capacity, which has been compared to a mirror), as well as of all thoughts (i.e., of all reflections). This spontaneous dissolution of delusion in the unveiling of our own original condition of total plentitude and perfection may be compared to waking up from a dream or to the removal of a veil.

ⁱ Dudjom Rinpoche, J. Y. D., English 1991, Trans.: Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. I, pp. 300-301.

ⁱⁱ *Khregs-chod*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Man-ngag-sde* or *Man-ngag-gyi-sde*.

THE THREEFOLD DIVISION OF THE PATH

Buddhism consolidated itself in Tibet through two main “disseminations of the doctrine,” each of which produced a corresponding series of translations: (1) The first dissemination (ngadarⁱ), which took place in the eight century CE thanks to the undertakings of the great *Guru Padmasambhava*, the great Master *Vimalamitra*, the abbot-scholar *Shantarakshita*, and the illustrious Tibetan disciples of these teachers, resulted in the gathering of some of these disciples, together with many other Tibetans who had studied in India, in government-sponsored translation centers that produced a corpus of works that nowadays is known as the “Old Translations.”ⁱⁱ (2) The second dissemination (chidarⁱⁱⁱ), which was initiated in the tenth and eleventh centuries CE by the translator *Rinchen Zangpo* (958-1055), and then carried on by *Atisha* and a series of other teachers, led many Tibetans to form groups of translators, which produced the new rendering of the complete series of original Buddhist works, as well as of the authoritative commentaries, presently known as the “New Translations.”^{iv} These became the basis of the new or Sarmapa^v schools, the main ones being initially the Kadampa^{vi}, the Kagyüpa and the Sakyapa;^{vii} however, later on *Je Tsongkhapa* (1357-1419) founded the Gelugpa School, which absorbed the Kadampa School and which, since the time of the “Great Fifth” Dalai Lama, has been the school of origin of the rulers of Tibet. After the second dissemination and the establishment of the Sarmapa Schools, in order to distinguish the sum of doctrines and practices established in Tibet during the first dissemination from the new forms of Buddhism, the former was termed the “Ancient” or Nyingmapa Tradition (which, unlike the “New” or Sarmapa schools, until the forced exile of many Tibetan Masters in the twentieth century, was not centralized under the authority of a hierarchy).¹⁹⁵

In recent centuries, all Tibetan traditions have divided the Way (i.e., the Fourth Noble Truth) into three Paths, which are the *Hinayana*, the *Mahayana* and the *Vajrayana*, and which in the tradition that nowadays is called Ancient or Nyingmapa are classified into nine vehicles, whereas in the “New” or Sarmapa Schools are subdivided into seven vehicles. However, in this book I will explain the Path in terms of an older and more natural and self-consistent tradition taught in Tibet during the first dissemination, which also classifies the Way that is the Fourth Noble Truth into nine vehicles and three Paths, but in which each Path corresponds to one of the three aspects of the individual (which are, respectively, body, speech and mind), and has as its source the aspect of Buddhahood that is the true nature of the aspect of the individual to which it corresponds (in the case of the body, the *nirmanakaya*; in the case of the voice, the *sambhogakaya*; and in the case of the mind, the *dharmakaya*). Therefore, in this tradition the three Paths are not the *Hinayana*, the *Mahayana*, and the *Vajrayana*, but: (1) the Path of renunciation, known as

ⁱ *sNga-dar*.

ⁱⁱ Tib., *sNga-'gyur*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Phyi-dar*.

^{iv} Tib., *gSar-'gyur*.

^v *gSar-ma-pa*.

^{vi} *bKa'-gdams-pa*.

^{vii} *Sa-skyapa*.

Sutra vehicle (*Sutrayana*), which is based mainly on the level of the body, which was taught by the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni, and which is subdivided into *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*; (2) the Path of transformation, which is the *Vajra* vehicle (*Vajrayana*), also called Continuity vehicle (*Tantrayana*) and Secret *Mantra* vehicle (*Guhyamantrayana*), which is based mainly on the level of the voice, which arose through *sambhogakaya* manifestations, and which is classified into outer and inner Tantras; and (3) the Path of spontaneous liberation, corresponding to the Continuity vehicle of the Primordial Yoga (*Atiyogatantrayana*), which is based mainly on the level of the mind, which arose directly from the *dharmakaya*, and which contains three series of teachings. (Occasionally I have referred to this vehicle by the neologisms Primordial Vehicle [*Atiyana*] or Primordial Vehicle of total completeness / plenitude and perfection [Dzogchen].)

This threefold Path containing nine vehicles, which originally was taught in Oddiyana (the valley of Kabul in present day Afghanistan and/or the valley of Swat in present day Pakistan) and then was established in Tibet in the eighth century CE represents, clearly, the most complete, natural and self-consistent system of Buddhism that has come to us: it is the most complete insofar as it contains the nine vehicles, which comprise the widest variety of views and methods, corresponding to the widest variety of individuals; it is the most natural and self-consistent insofar as each of the Paths responds to one of the three aspects of the individual and has its source in one of the three kayas (aspects or dimensions) or Buddhahood (which is not the case with the division into *Hinayana*, *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana*, which arose mainly as a result of historical conditions).

(1) The Path of renunciation (Tib., *pong lam*ⁱ), corresponding to the *Hetuyana*, *Hetulakshanayana* (Tib., *gyu tsennyi thekpa*ⁱⁱ) or “cause-based vehicle of (the discrimination of) characteristics,” in which one is supposed to attain the Fruit when the fruition of causes (Skt., *hetu*; Tib., *gyu*ⁱⁱⁱ) is catalyzed by the concurrence of secondary conditions (Skt., *pratyaya*; Tib., *kyen*^{iv}), consists of the vehicles contained in the *Sutra* Vehicle or *Sutrayana*.

The principle of renunciation corresponds mainly to the level of the body insofar as it requires us to strictly regulate our conduct; insofar as it requires us to keep physically away from certain stimuli; insofar as the vows taken in order to regulate our behavior and avoid certain stimuli have a concrete physical correspondent (for example, wearing the habits of a monk or of a nun, or the white clothes of a householder) and last only so long as the physical body continues to live; etc. This Path is easiest to understand and apply insofar as the level of the body is the most concrete and tangible aspect of existence, which all beings can apprehend through the senses, and that we experience through sensations all of us are very familiar with—such as the pain and suffering that Shakyamuni explained in the context of the Four Noble Truths (which are the most basic and general teaching of this Path).

The source of the Path of renunciation is also at the level of the body, for the true condition of the body is the *nirmanakaya*, and this Path manifested by way of the

ⁱ *sPong lam*.

ⁱⁱ *rGyu mtshan-nyid/phyi'i theg-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *rGyu*.

^{iv} *rKyen*.

nirmanakaya Shakyamuni, through the three successive “Promulgations of a cycle of teachings.”

In this Path, the passions are viewed as poisons, and the stimuli that activate them are viewed as venomous snakes to be warded off. Perhaps it would be permissible to say that its functional principle consists in preventing passions from taking hold of us and dragging us into chain reactions, so that we may progressively develop the mental calm and capacity of introspection necessary in order to apply the essential methods of the specific vehicle of this Path that we have set out to practice, and by so doing we may attain the condition that vehicle regards as the unconditioned, unmade and definitive realization.

To conclude, according to the best-known interpretations of this Path, its point of arrival is the realization of voidness.¹⁹⁶ In the Hinayana, this realization is limited to the voidness of human beings.¹⁹⁷ In the Mahayana, it also must include the voidness of phenomena that are not human beings. As we have seen, the various subschools of the *Madhyamaka* Rangtongpa, in particular, understand voidness as being in all cases the absence of self-existence or inherent existence.

(2) The Path of transformation (Tib., *gyur lam*ⁱ), corresponding to the *Phalayana* (Tib., *drabu thekpa*ⁱⁱ) or “Fruit-based vehicle,” in which the Fruit is supposed to be attained as a result of the unfolding of an initial unveiling of the condition corresponding to it (which in the inner Tantras takes place in what is known as “sample of primordial gnosis” or *peyi yeshe*ⁱⁱⁱ), rather than as an effect of causes, comprises the vehicles contained in the Unalterable vehicle (*Vajrayana*), Continuity vehicle (*Tantrayana*) or Secret Sacred Words vehicle (*Guhyamantrayana*).

This Path is said to be related principally to the voice, which is literally true insofar as it emphasizes the pronunciation of mantras; however, on a deeper level the voice represents our energy, of which the vibrations that make up our voice are a perceptible aspect (and which, just like the voice, is related to breathing, and is a link between body and mind). In fact, in this Path we work with the organism’s energetic system, and we are supposed to modify our vision, which is a function of clarity and of the flow of the nature or *rangzhin* aspect of the Base,¹⁹⁸ and thus is a function of our energy.¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, since the said energy does not come to an end with the death of the body, the Tantric promise or *samaya* that characterizes this Path does not come to an end with the death of the physical body.

The level of energy is far more difficult to apprehend and understand than that of the body, for most of us cannot perceive it through the senses.²⁰⁰ Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu often resorts to the example of seeing a person far away coming toward us: we can recognize the person because we can see his or her physical form, gait and gestures, etc., but we cannot see his or her energy. Therefore, this Path requires a much higher capacity than the Path of renunciation, which is accessible to all kinds of human beings; in order to practice it and bring it to fruition, one must have the

ⁱ *sGyur lam*.

ⁱⁱ *’Bras-bu theg-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *dPe-yi ye-shes*.

capacity to apprehend, or somehow to work with, the subtle luminous dimension of the essence of elements.²⁰¹

As will be shown in a subsequent chapter, this Path was communicated to humans through the level of our energy, which in the state of realization corresponds to the *sambhogakaya*, for the first human links in the transmission of the different Tantras received the respective methods through manifestations of this dimension, aspect or *kaya* of Buddhahood (whether these manifestations were generated by Shakyamuni, as asserted in the accounts appended to the higher Tantras of the New Translations, or whether they manifested spontaneously to the mahasiddhas in Oddiyana and other countries of Asia, as asserted in the accounts associated with the Nyingmapa Tantras).

An example of the general principle of transforming vision that is common to the Path of purification of the outer Tantras and the Path of transformation of the inner Tantras could be the perception that someone is creating problems for us: if we transform our vision so as to find ourselves in a pure dimension of Awake beings, dakas and dakinis, and so on, there is no way we can get angry at the person we were perceiving as a source of problems. In the Path of transformation properly speaking (as distinct from the Path of purification consisting of the outer Tantras) the passions, which are particularly intense manifestations of delusion and therefore of conditioned vision, are the means for discovering the uncompounded, unconditioned, unmade nature that the *Vajra* vehicles refer to as the Base. For example, if we come to be possessed by a strong anger, by applying the principle of *Anuyoga*²⁰² we instantly transform ourselves through visualization into a wrathful deity in the dimension of the *sambhogakaya*. The anger may increase to the point of making the whole universe tremble;ⁱ however, if by means of the practice we get beyond the subject-object duality and therefore no longer have the notion that there is an external entity that harmed us, given the fact that all passions are attitudes of a subject toward an object, anger liberates as aimless pure energy. It is obvious that this requires a higher capacity than the method of renunciation: practitioners of the *Sutrayana* who lack this capacity are quite right to be afraid to confront their anger, and in applying methods to cause it to subside, for if they allow it to develop, the passion could lead them to harm both others and themselves.²⁰³ Thus in order to become a Tantric practitioner we must necessarily have the capacity to let the anger develop and increase without being obfuscated by it, maintaining the capacity to apply the corresponding methods—so that we may use the anger as a vehicle to realize the true condition of the Base. The same applies to all passions.

The use of the venom of the passions in order to neutralize the delusion of which the passions are particularly intense manifestations, thereby attaining the most precious object of human yearning, which is Awakening, has been compared to the manufacture of anti-snake serum out of snake venom, to the homeopathic principle of healing syndromes through a particular type of application of the agents that normally induce them, and to the transformation of poisons into medicines or of coarse metals into precious ones through alchemical means (which, as the teachings of this vehicle warn, always involves some risk).²⁰⁴ It is said that in this Path the passions are like firewood and wisdom is like fire: the more wood we have, the

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu, translation Adriano Clemente, 1986, p. 35.

greater the fire that ensues. In fact, realization here depends on the two factors that are *amrita* or nectar of detached wisdom (Tib., *dütsi*ⁱ), represented by human semen, and *rakta* or raw passion (Tib., *rakta*ⁱⁱ), represented by human menstrual blood.²⁰⁵

To conclude, it must be noted that in this Path the starting point is the realization of voidness that, according to so many teachings, is the point of arrival of the Path of renunciation (but which here may be obtained directly by the means proper to this vehicle),²⁰⁶ and the arrival point is the realization of *rigpa* (Truth, Presence of Awake Awareness) that is the starting point of the Path of spontaneous liberation.

- (3) The Path of spontaneous liberation (Tib., *dröl lam*ⁱⁱⁱ), corresponding to the vehicle entirely beyond the cause-Fruit relation and therefore beyond both *Hetuyana* and *Phalayana*, is what I have decided to abbreviate as the “primordial vehicle” or *Atiyana*.²⁰⁷ Its practice can unfold only once we have had an initial reGnition (of) the essence or *ngowo*^{iv} aspect of the Base that is the true condition of all reality, in what is known as Direct introduction to the state of *rigpa* (Truth, Presence or Awake Awareness).

This Path is principally related to the mind and its true nature, the *dharmakaya*, and therefore it does not require us either to avoid some kinds of entity at the physical level, as in the Path of renunciation, or to transform our impure vision into pure vision, like in the Path of purification: since the passions result from a more than usually intense delusory valuation of thought, which gives rise to a particularly charged attitude a mental subject has toward an object, and since the true condition of thought and of all of reality is primordial gnosis (which, being intrinsically all-liberating, is called *chikshe kundröl*^v or “all-liberating single gnosis”), it suffices to reGnize the true condition of the thoughts at the source of the passions for the former to manifest as the *dharmakaya* and the latter to liberate themselves spontaneously together with the associated tensions. Furthermore, so long as primordial gnosis remains patent, whatever conditioned, made experience may begin to arise will instantly liberate itself spontaneously and thus will not veil the unmade and unconditioned essence of all reality. However, this does not mean that we depend on the manifestation of the passions (as in the Path of transformation, in which we work at the level of energy): whatever conditioned experience may veil the unconditioned essence will dissolve spontaneously upon reGnizing its true condition.

Since the level of mind is far subtler than the level of energy, this Path requires a considerably higher capacity than the Path of transformation. Furthermore, since in the Path of transformation we are not so completely and directly aware of our own potentiality, we have to purify our dimension by the power of a deity received from the Master, which in spite of being an embodiment of our own potentiality, works

ⁱ *bdud-rtsi*. As a medicine or elixir, *bdud-rtsi sman*; as the elixir or medicine of attainment *bdud-rtsi sman-grub*.

ⁱⁱ *Rak-ta*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Grol lam*.

^{iv} *Ngo-bo*.

^v *gcik-shes kun-grol*. In Tibetan primordial gnosis is called *ye-shes* (Skt., *jñāna*); *gcik-shes* means “single gnosis,” and *kun-grol* means “all-liberating.”

as a mediator so that the latter may manifest its purifying power. Conversely, in the Path of spontaneous liberation we are to such a degree aware (of) our own potentiality that we can purify our dimension *directly* through it, without there being a need for it to assume the guise of a deity. For example, in the Menngagdeⁱ series of Dzogchen teachings there are two levels of practice, which are Tekchöⁱⁱ and Thögelⁱⁱⁱ. In the practice of Tekchö all delusions are directly purified through the reGnition (of) the true condition of the ngowo or essence aspect of the Base, which corresponds to its primordial purity (katak) and to the *dharmakaya* or mind aspect of Buddhahood: the instant we realize we have fallen under the sway of delusion, we look right into whatever thought is present and reGnize its essence (the ngowo aspect of the Base reGnized upon Direct Introduction), whereupon the *dharmakaya* manifests and the thought instantly liberates itself in a spontaneous manner.²⁰⁸ Then in the practice of Thögel the other two aspects of the Base are integrated into this reGnition, by means that will only give rise to the expected results if an intensive practice of Tekchö has endowed us with a sufficiently high capacity of spontaneous liberation.

As will be shown in a subsequent chapter, the first link of transmission in the human dimension received this Path through the level of mind, as the unadorned state of *dharmakaya* (since its methods work at the level of mind, there was no need for the first human links to have visions that thereafter would become methods of the practice), and its practice takes place mainly at the level of mind. However, its most advanced stages (and in particular practices like Thögel and the Yangthik^{iv}) involve the most consummate use of the level of energy, which, unlike the use of energy in the Path of transformation, is not based on applying action in order to reach a given level of realization (the one that the Tantras refer to as *swabhavikaya*, but which according to the Dzogchen teachings is actually the *dharmakaya*²⁰⁹), but on the principle of lhundrub utterly beyond action, and the function of which is to *expand* the already obtained realization of the *dharmakaya* into the most complete realization of the *trikaya* (i.e., of full Buddhahood) that may be attained through any spiritual Path.²¹⁰

Furthermore, the principle of lhundrub or pure spontaneity is not limited only to the advanced stages of the Path: though some of the explanations in previous paragraphs may have given the reader the mistaken idea that in it the practitioner *causes* the liberation of thoughts and experiences by looking into their true nature and so on, the truth is the very opposite: in this Path liberation occurs spontaneously in such a way that it becomes perfectly evident that it *cannot be caused*—which is the main reason why this vehicle is said to be utterly beyond the principle of cause and effect.²¹¹ (In Part Two of this book the principle called lhundrub or “pure spontaneity,” which is the reason why this Path is utterly beyond cause and effect, will be discussed in greater detail.)

Since, just as happens with the level of energy, the mind does not end upon the death of the physical body, the commitment of this Path (which consists in the four

ⁱ *Men-ngag-sde*.

ⁱⁱ *Khregs-chod*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Thod-rgal*.

^{iv} *Yang-thig*.

or ten absences that will be considered in a subsequent chapter) does not end with this human life.

In this Path the starting point is the realization of rigpa (Truth, Presence or Awake Awareness) that is the arrival point of the Path of transformation,²¹² and the point of arrival is the exhaustion of *samsara* involving the definitive uprooting of the subject-object duality and of the illusion of the existence of an internal dimension and an external dimension, which results in realizations such as the rainbow body (jalüⁱ), the body of atoms (lü dü! thren du dengⁱⁱ), the body of light (ökyikuⁱⁱⁱ or öphung^{iv}) or the total transference (powa chenpo^v), which are exclusive to this supreme Path of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*. Thus it is not difficult to understand why it is said that the Path of spontaneous liberation may lead those with the appropriate capacities to a more complete Awakening in shorter time.

However, the fact that the starting point of the Path of transformation is the point of arrival of the Path of renunciation, and that the starting point of the Path of spontaneous liberation is the point of arrival of the Path of transformation, does *not* mean that we have to practice the three Paths successively, following each to the end before we can approach the next. On the contrary, if we have the right capacity we can enter directly the Path of spontaneous liberation through Direct introduction to the state of rigpa without previously having followed any other Path. And if we lack the capacity necessary for practicing this Path, this does *not* mean that we are doomed not to do so in this lifetime, for we can develop the capacity by applying the corresponding methods. Conversely, if we have the required capacity but at any given moment this Path is not working for us, we apply whatever method of the Path of transformation or of the Path of renunciation will be effective in the situation we are facing.

In terms of contemporary science, perhaps it may be said that the *Sutrayana* Path of renunciation works mainly by applying concepts, which are mainly associated with the digitally-functioning brain hemisphere (which in males is the left and in females the right), in order to directly effect the changes we want to carry out—which is not the most effective method, insofar as all that depends on this kind of functioning is subject to the “reverse law” or “law of inverted effect” that has already been considered. In turn, the *Vajrayana* Path of transformation is based mainly on modifying one’s vision, which acts directly on the brain hemisphere having an analog functioning (which in males is the one on the right, and in females is the one on the left)—a strategy that is far more skillful as a means to transform one’s psyche. Finally, the *Atiyana*^{vi} Path of spontaneous liberation works by means of the *skillful activation* of the “reverse law” or “law of inverted effect,” so that lhundrub²¹³ (i.e., spontaneous) loops may be unleashed that will lead delusion to its *reductio ad absurdum* and subsequent spontaneous liberation—which is the most skillful and direct method, leading to the most complete realization in the shortest time.²¹⁴

ⁱ 'Ja'-lus.

ⁱⁱ Lus rdul phran du denges.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Od-kyi sku.

^{iv} 'Od-phung.

^v 'Pho-ba chen-po.

^{vi} As we have seen, this is my abbreviation for *Atiyogatantrayana*.

The classification of Buddhist vehicles into the three Paths summarized above has come to us through two works: (1) the *Kathang Dennga*ⁱ by Namkhai Nyingpoⁱⁱ, which at the time of the first dissemination of the *Dharma* in Tibet was concealed as a termaⁱⁱⁱ or spiritual treasure to be revealed when the appropriate time came for it to be publicly taught and practiced, and then, in the sixteenth century, was discovered by tertön Örgyen Lingpa.²¹⁵ (2) The *Samten Migdrön*^{iv} by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe^v, which was written after the former and which was entombed in Tun Huang from the eleventh or twelfth century CE until 1908, when French sinologist Paul Pelliot explored the cave temples that had been discovered accidentally by a local farmer at the turn of the twentieth century.²¹⁶ The fact that the *Samten Migdrön*, which was entombed for so long at Tun Huang and thus was saved from later modifications, contains quotations from the *Kathang Dennga* that correspond with exactitude to the relevant paragraphs of the terma revealed by Örgyen Lingpa, attests to the authenticity of the latter. And since both texts were protected from any possible modifications for nearly a millennium, there can be no doubt that the classification of the nine vehicles into these three Paths was established in Tibet before the political (and ensuing cultural) dominance of the New or Sarmapa schools caused the Old or Nyingmapa Tradition to abandon this classification of its nine vehicles and adhere to the one they shared with the Sarmapa, which, as we have seen, is the one that divides them into *Hinayana*, *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana*. To my knowledge, the only Master who, in our time, has taught the ancient classification of the nine vehicles of the Nyingmapa into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation, has been Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, who, possessing the necessary capacity, courage and uprightness has set out to restore the teachings to their original form.

SCHEMA OF THE PATHS AND VEHICLES

To conclude this introduction to the Fourth Noble Truth, it is necessary to arrange Namkhai Nyingpo's and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's classification of the nine vehicles of the Nyingmapa plus the Sudden *Mahayana* (which was also considered by these two Masters and authors) into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation, in a schematic way that may allow the reader to grasp it fully.

The totality of possible vehicles is classified into: (A) mundane vehicle, whose aim is to improve the quality of samsaric existence, and (B) supramundane vehicles, the aim of which is to lead the practitioner beyond *samsara*. The supramundane vehicles are classified as follows:

ⁱ *bKa'thang sDe-lnga*.

ⁱⁱ *gNubs Nam-mkha'i sNying-po*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *gTer-ma*.

^{iv} *bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*.

^v *gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*.

Hetuyana or Causal Vehicle	Path of renunciation	<i>Hinayana</i>	(1) <i>Shravakayana</i> (2) <i>Pratyekabuddhayana</i>
		<i>Mahayana</i>	(3a) <i>Bodhisattvayana</i> (3b) <i>Sudden Mahayana</i>
		outer Tantras (Path of purification)	(4) <i>Kriyatantrayana</i> (5) <i>Ubhayatantrayana</i> (6) <i>Yogatantrayana</i> ²¹⁷
Phalayana or Fruit-based Vehicle	Path of transformation	inner Tantras (Path of transformation <i>stricto sensu</i>)	(7) <i>Mahayogatantrayana</i> (8) <i>Anuyogatantrayana</i>
Vehicle beyond cause -Fruit relation	Path of spontaneous liberation	<i>Atiyana</i> ⁱ -Dzogchen	(9) <i>Atiyogatantrayana</i>

ⁱ As we have seen, this is my abbreviation for the longer term *Atiyogatantrayana*.

THE PATH OF RENUNCIATION

As we have seen, the Path of renunciation is what is known as the *Sutra Vehicle* or *Sutrayana*, in which the stimuli that activate the passions are seen as venomous snakes to ward off. The reason why this Path views defiling emotions (which so often are themselves negative actions of the sphere of mind²¹⁸) as poisons is that, if the individual does not exert effective self-restraint and allows them to manifest, they could lead him or her to commit negative actions of speech and body that are harmful to others—as well as to the agent him or herself, who as a result will have to go through the suffering involved in the experiences of lower realms (i.e., the hell realm, the *preta* realm²¹⁹ and the animal realm). Furthermore, the manifestation of conflicting emotions would keep the practitioner in a state of agitation, barring her or him from progressively developing the detachment, mental calm and capacity for introspection necessary for applying the most essential methods of the vehicle of the Path of renunciation that she or he has set to practice.

The canonical teachings of the gradual varieties of the Path of renunciation are contained in the *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* versions of the *Tripitaka* or “triple basket” of Buddhist teachings—which, when the term is understood *lato sensu*, comprises the *Sutra Pitaka*, the *Abhidharma Pitaka*, and the *Vinaya Pitaka*.²²⁰ The sutras transmit teachings on the Buddhist view and training in Contemplation. The *Abhidharma*, in its turn, explains the functionality of human experience in fields that range from physics to psychology and “epistemology.” Finally, the *Vinaya* has to do with training in the rules of morality and discipline. After their codification, the teachings of these three “baskets” were commented on and expanded by important teachers who produced the commentaries or *shastra* and other texts of greater or lesser importance.

The gradual teachings of the Path of renunciation or *Sutrayana* divide the way into five successive paths (Skt., *marga*; Tib., lam), which are: (1) the path of accumulation (*sambharamarga*ⁱ), (2) the path of preparation or path of application (*prayogamarga*ⁱⁱ), (3) the path of Vision (*darshanamarga*ⁱⁱⁱ), (4) the path of Contemplation (*bhavanamarga*^{iv}), and (5) the path of no more learning (*ashaikshamarga*^v). The accumulation of merits and wisdom, as well as the “thorough abandonings” (*samyakprahana*^{vi}) whereby four factors are developed through meditation

ⁱ Tib., *Tshogs-lam*.

ⁱⁱ Tib., *sByor-lam*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tib., *mThong-lam*.

^{iv} Tib., *bsGom-lam*.

^v Tib., *Mi-slob-pa'i lam*.

^{vi} Pali, *samma-prahana*; Tib., *yang dag par spong ba*.

and moral training,²²¹ are the essence of the path of accumulation. The path of preparation or application, as its name suggests, prepares the practitioner to enter the next path by allowing him or her to overcome the fear that bars entrance to it; besides, it closes the doors to lower realms. The path of Vision, being the first supramundane path, represents the entrance to the Path in a truer and more thorough sense; in the *Hinayana* this is marked by the transition from blind faith in the Four Noble Truths to the actual, true understanding of these Truths, which transforms the individual into a “stream enterer” (Pali, *shrota-apanna*); in the *Mahayana*, entrance to this path—which corresponds to the first *bodhisattva* level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*)—is marked by the realization of voidness and the manifestation of the so-called absolute *bodhichitta qua* indivisibility of emptiness and compassion. The path of Contemplation involves the gradual development of the realization obtained in the previous path, which in the *Mahayana* involves the progressive development from the second *bodhisattva* level to the tenth. Finally, the path of no more learning is the attainment of the final Fruit of the Path one is following; if one is a follower of the *Mahayana*, one becomes a *Samyak-sambuddha* or fully Awake One. Thus there is no doubt that the gradual varieties of the path of renunciation, including the *Shravakayana*, the *Pratyekabuddhayana* and the *Bodhisattvayana*, which are the ones that divide the Way into five paths, function with great effectiveness. However, they are far more arduous and slower than the vehicles of the Path of transformation and than the Path of spontaneous liberation—and even than the sudden or abrupt Path of the *Mahayana*.

The Vehicles of the Path of Renunciation of the *Sutrayana*

The *Mahayana* and higher vehicles classify the vehicles of the Path of renunciation that make up the Way of the Sutras or *Sutrayana* into *Hinayana* or Narrow Vehicle and *Mahayana* or Wider Vehicle. The *Hinayana* is generally subdivided into the Vehicle of the shravakas (*Shravakayana*) and the Vehicle of pratyekabuddhas (*Pratyekabuddhayana*). In particular, the *Kathang Dennga* and the *Samten Migdrön* subdivide the *Mahayana* into the gradual vehicle of bodhisattvas (*Bodhisattvayana*), and the sudden *Mahayana*, corresponding to the *Dhyana*, *Ch’an* or *Zen* school.²²²

In Tibetan Buddhism, the first three vehicles of the *Sutrayana* listed above (i.e., the vehicles of the *Sutrayana* in general, with the sole exception of the sudden *Mahayana*) are also known as the three vehicles of philosophical characteristics. In *The Precious Vase*, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu quotes Rongzompa’s explanation of this term:ⁱ

The tradition that mainly teaches the [various] characteristics [of the phenomena of *samsara* and *nirvana*] is called the Philosophical Characteristics Vehicle. In fact it discloses the general and particular characteristics [of a phenomenon], the characteristics of the [impure] dimension of the emotions and those of the totally purified dimension and so on.

Thus concerning their approach to teaching and application, these vehicles may be said to be based on intellectual discrimination between this and that, and therefore on the conditioned and made, rather than on directly entering the unmade and unconditioned

ⁱ Tibetan Text 4, p. 197, 1. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001.

state and thus going beyond discrimination. However, all vehicles of philosophical characteristics must have their own methods for gaining access to the unconditioned and unmade (in the case of the *Mahayana*, by seeing through the conditioned and made): otherwise they would not be considered to be actual Buddhist vehicles.

THE *HINAYANA*

In respect to the *Hinayana*, it is fitting to point out that each of its two vehicles is appropriate for a different type of individual and culminates in a different type of Fruit:

(a) The *Shravakayana* is the vehicle of the shravakas or “listeners,” who constantly follow a Buddha or someone with greater experience than themselves, applying the teachings they receive in order to stop the causes of *duhkha* and their effects, and thus transform themselves into arhatsⁱ or realized ones of this vehicle.

(b) The *Pratyekabuddhayana* is the vehicle of the pratyekabuddhas or “solitary realizers,” who in the Buddhist spiritual hierarchy occupy a place superior to that of the *shravaka* who has reached the state of *arhat*, but inferior to that of a Buddha. In fact, although the title *pratyekabuddha* contains the term “*buddha*,”²²³ the “solitary realizer” does not show the traits that characterize the perfect and totally Awake One or *anuttara samyak sambuddha*, such as omniscience, the ten powers, the major and minor marks, and so on. (According to the *Hinayana*, in every age there is only one perfect and totally Awake One, who in our age is the Buddha Shakyamuni; according to the *Mahayana*, in every age there may be countless perfect and totally Awake Ones, for all human beings have the potentiality to reach the definitive Fruit of the Ample vehicle, which is full Buddhahood.)

Essence of the View of Shravakas²²⁴

Concerning the definition of the term *shravaka*, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu quotes Rongzompa:ⁱⁱ

The term *shravaka* stands for ‘listeners,’ and in fact the shravakas are so called because, unlike the pratyekabuddhas, they cannot waive receiving teachings from a teacher, as in order to realize the Fruit they need the basis of a teacher’s teachings. At times the term ‘*shravaka*’ is interpreted to mean ‘listen and propagate’ because, unlike the pratyekabuddhas, the shravakas transmit to others [the knowledge of] the Fruit they have accomplished

According to the shravakas, of the non-Buddhist theories that Buddhism regard as extremist, those that assert substantiality and/or eternity imply an exaggeration of the truth (i.e., an overestimation) and as such we can compare them to mistaking a rope for a snake, whereas those that assert total nonexistence imply a degradation of the truth (i.e., an underestimation) and as such may be compared to mistaking a snake for a rope—which is far more dangerous, as anyone who takes a snake for a rope runs the risk of falling victim to its venom.²²⁵

ⁱ Pali, *arahant*; Skt., *arhat*; Tib., *dgra-bcom-pa*.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 4, p. 198, 2. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001.

What the shravakas deem absolutely true are the instants of consciousness, and the infinitesimal particles of the four elements that make up the five aggregates (Skt., *skandha*; Tib., *phungpo*ⁱ: form, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness), the twelve sense bases (Skt., *ayatana*; Tib., *kyemche*ⁱⁱ: the six external constituents, which are the fields of the six sense objects wherein objects are singled out, plus the six internal constituents, corresponding to the six sense organs),²²⁶ and the eighteen sense constituents (Skt., *dhatu*; Tib., *kham*ⁱⁱⁱ: the twelve sense bases or *ayatana* just enumerated, plus the six modes of sensory consciousness²²⁷).²²⁸ By meditating gradually on the Four Noble Truths, from the first to the fourth, they progressively realize the four Fruits or four types of result: stream-enterer, once-returner, nonreturner and *arhat*.

Concerning schools of thought, in principle the shravakas may adhere to any of the eighteen schools of the *Hinayana*, or to any of the other schools of this vehicle, such as the *Vaibhashika*, the *Sautrantika*, the *Theravada* and so on. However, in our time all shravakas belong to the *Theravada* School,²²⁹ which prevails in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea and part of Vietnam. In Tibet, in particular, from the first dissemination (ngadar^{iv}) of Buddhism the shravakas were traditionally associated with the *sarvastivada* or realistic view of the *Vaibhashika* and to the slightly less realistic view of the *Sautrantika*, which were the two *Hinayana* schools of thought taught in the land of the snows (though some Sarmapa texts have associated the view of the *Sautrantika* with the vehicle of the pratyekabuddhas,²³⁰ the Nyingma treatises dealing with vehicles and schools make it clear that this is one of the philosophical schools of the shravakas). In fact, the *Rigpa Rangshar Tantra* of the Dzogchen Menngagde (*Upadeshavarga*) reads:^v

In the *Shravaka* Vehicle the entrance gate consists of the four Truths...

Within [this Vehicle] there exist two streams: the *Vaibhashikas* and the *Sautrantikas*.

The *Shravakayana* designates those who reach the third path (which, as we have already seen, is that of Vision) as “stream-enterers” (*shrotapanna*). In the fourth path (which, as we have seen, is that of Contemplation), the shravakas gradually free themselves from the sensual desires proper to the sphere of sensuality (*kama loka* or *kamadhatu*): when they overcome the six strongest degrees of desire among the nine that are enumerated, they are known as “once returners” (*sakridagami*); when they have transcended the three remaining degrees of desire, they are known as “nonreturners” (*anagami*). Finally, when they have also freed themselves from the illusion of absolute existence with respect to the sphere of form (*rupa loka* or *rupadhatu*) and the sphere of formlessness (*arupa loka* or *arupyadhatu*), they reach the final path, which means that they have obtained liberation.

The practice of this vehicle has been explained in terms of the Four Noble Truths as “eliminating the cause, the effects are cleared.” However, as the *Kunche Gyälpo* puts it:^{vi}

ⁱ *Phung-po*.

ⁱⁱ *sKye-mched*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Khams*.

^{iv} *sNga-dar*.

^v Tibetan Text 5, p. 507, 4. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 152.

^{vi} Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, pp. 169, 151, 182.

Coining the terms “cause and effect,”
 some believe that by eliminating both virtue and negativities
 they can release themselves from this world:
 however, this merely shows complacency in accepting and rejecting...
 Followers of the vehicles based on cause and effect
 [hold diverse views about the nature] of existence.
 [The shravakas] deem it poison and form the concept of “renunciation.”
 When desire and aversion arise, [the shravakas]
 deem [the five sense objects] to be the cause of the passions and of suffering.
 Consequently, they try to eliminate them, even though
 precisely these five natural objects are self-arisen wisdom.
 Being unable to eliminate them in less than three kalpas,
 they continue to transmigrate in the three worlds (*kama*, *rupa* and *arupa*).

Essence of the View of Pratyekabuddhas

Just like the shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas assert that, among the non-Buddhist theories that Buddhism regard as extremist, those that assert substantiality and/or eternity imply an exaggeration of the truth (i.e., an overestimation) and as such we can compare them to mistaking a rope for a snake, whereas those that assert total nonexistence imply a degradation of the truth (i.e., an underestimation) and, as we have seen, as such may be compared to mistaking a snake for a rope.

According to most texts, both shravakas and pratyekabuddhas overcome all impediments to individual liberation insofar as they fully realize the nonexistence of human beings;²³¹ however, some texts assert that pratyekabuddhas hold the idea that the supposedly internal, subjective consciousness genuinely does indeed exist.²³² This is, at least, what the *Abhisamayalankara* by Maitreyanatha attributes them.ⁱⁱ

Since they renounce the idea of objects
 but they do not renounce the subject,
 one must know the Path genuinely subsumed therein
 to be that of a rhinoceros-like recipient (i.e., of a pratyekabuddha)

It is said that they renounce the idea of objects because, unlike the shravakas, who do not realize the nonexistence of phenomena other than human beings to any degree whatsoever and thus do not succeed in overcoming any of the obstructions to omniscience, the pratyekabuddhas have as their characteristic feature the understanding of the absence of independent being in the aggregate of form (one of the five *skandha*) and in part of the constituents of all of those phenomena that are not human beings (which means that, unlike the shravakas, they realize the voidness of at least some of the elements of entities that are not human beings²³³). Therefore, it is asserted that they abandon the coarse obstructions to omniscience but not the subtle ones, which are overcome only in the *Mahayana* and superior vehicles, which fully realize the voidness

ⁱ Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 159.

ⁱⁱ Quoted *ibidem*.

of phenomena that are not human beings. This is why the *Rigpa Rangshar Tantra* of the Dzogchen Upadesha reads:ⁱ

“In the *sutra* system of the pratyekabuddhas
the entrance gate consists of the twelve links of interdependence.
The view consists in understanding the absence of identity of the human being
and of one half of the phenomena that are not human beings.”²³⁴

Concerning the meaning of the name *pratyekabuddha*, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu quotes Rongzompa’s commentary:ⁱⁱ says (op. 31: p. 198, 5):

The pratyekabuddhas [solitary Buddhas] are so called because [in order] to accomplish the Fruit, unlike the shravakas they do not follow the oral teachings of a teacher and above all they do not communicate to others with words the *dharma* they attain. At times it is explained that they are so called because, unlike the bodhisattvas, they do not generate the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of many beings, but aspire solely to their own liberation. According to a further explanation, the terms *prata* and *buddha* mean ‘secondary cause’ and ‘understanding’ [respectively], because, after having accumulated merit [and wisdom] for countless kalpas (aeons) by means of a secondary cause, the pratyekabuddhas finally realize the state of Awakening; or because, understanding the secondary causes that underpin the twelve links of interdependence, such as the secondary cause of ignorance producing mental formations and so on, they attain realization. Thus they do understand secondary causes.

Since it is said that Shakyamuni did not teach the *Pratyekabuddhayana* directly, and since pratyekabuddhas do not teach at all, the precise origin of this vehicle is unknown. At any rate, the twelve links or *nidana* of interdependent origination or *pratitya samutpada*, which beyond doubt were taught by Shakyamuni, and the understanding of which is at the root of the realization of pratyekabuddhas, may be explained as follows:ⁱⁱⁱ

(A) The first three, which are the determining causes, are: (1) unawareness of the true condition and delusion (*avidya*), (2) repetitive mental formations (*samskara*), and (3) consciousness (*vijñāna*);

(B) The four links that are the result of the determining causes are: (4) name-and-form (*namarupa*), (5) sense bases (*sadayatana*), (6) contact (*sparsha*), and (7) sensation (*vedana*);

(C) The three links that are the causes of existence are: (8) desire (*trishna*), (9) attachment (*upadanaskandha*), and (10) becoming (*bhava*);

(D) The two links that are the result of the causes of existence are: (11) birth (*jati*), and (12) old-age-and-death (*jaramarana*).

The *Pratyekabuddhayana* considers that a realized individual of this vehicle has accumulated an immeasurably greater amount of merit than the *shravaka*, and asserts that there are two types of solitary realizers (*pratyekabuddha*): (1) those who live in times when no manifest Buddha is teaching and who go alone to live in the forest, reaching liberation by themselves by means of meditating on the “twelve links of interdependent origination” or twelve *nidana* or the *pratitya samutpada*, and obtaining *parinirvana* (a

ⁱ Tibetan Text 5, p. 510, 6. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 154.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 4, p. 198, 5. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 154.

ⁱⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 153.

term that refers to the physical death of a realized individual) four days after reaching realization;²³⁵ (2) those who live when a Buddha is teaching and therefore do not have to go to the forest. Although the paths and realizations of these practitioners are equivalent to those of the *shravaka*, in this vehicle titles such as “stream enterer,” “once returner” and “nonreturner” are not used.

With regard to the pratyekabuddhas, the *Kunche Gyälpo* states:ⁱ

When the five objects of the single, natural condition manifest,
due to desire and aversion [the pratyekabuddhas]
deem them to be the cause of *samsara*. Consequently,
they try to eliminate them, even though in reality
precisely these are self-arisen wisdom.
Thus, unsuccessful for many kalpas,
they continue to transmigrate in the three worlds.

Even though the fundamental nature, pure and total Awake awareness,
is one alone, [the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas]
speak of the Four Noble Truths concerning suffering and its origin.
Affirming that the origin of suffering is the cause of rebirth in the three lower states,
they forsake the fundamental nature that is pure and total Awake awareness.
Thus, not understanding the fundamental nature, they forsake it.

THE MAHAYANA

We have seen that the *Hinayana* asserted that human beings do not exist truly and independently as selves, but did not affirm that phenomena that are not human beings do not truly exist and have no independent self-nature.²³⁶ Failing to realize the voidness of so many phenomena causes wisdom to be limited and hindered by the idea of something nonempty and obstructing—which is directly related to the fact that the *Hinayana* is said to lead to individual liberation, but not to the all-embracing, unimpeded wisdom that is the essence of what often has been called “omniscience,” which is held to be exclusive to Buddhas and which is the final goal of the *Mahayana* and other higher vehicles. Conversely, the fact that the *Mahayana* is intended to lead to the “omniscience” of full Buddhahood is directly related to its rejection of the supposedly true existence of a self-nature or substance both in human beings and in phenomena that are not human beings. Furthermore, this fact and the related rejection of a self-nature or substance in all kinds of phenomena depend directly on the *Mahayana* aspiration to Awaken with a view to helping all beings be definitively liberated from suffering.²³⁷

It is generally held that the term *Hinayana* or “Narrow vehicle” is due to the fact that in this vehicle we work primarily for our own liberation from suffering. Though this is correct and true, the “narrow” character of the *Hinayana* also lies in the fact that this vehicle is more strictly based on the principle of renunciation, according to which is necessary to adopt a set of vows by virtue of which one commits oneself to avoiding different sets of actions—which has been compared to treading a narrow path between a cliff and a precipice, in which one has to place one’s feet exactly on the way laid down or

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, pp. 183, 177. I have modified the terminology in order to make it agree with the one used throughout this book.

fall down the abyss. In turn, the *Mahayana*'s "wider" character is not only due to the fact that one works primarily for the salvation of all beings, but also to the fact that it is more properly based on the principle of training, which implies the commitment to break any prohibition and go beyond any limits of one's own if that is necessary to benefit others (and there is some guarantee that the effects of one's course of action will be positive), and thus it is like a wide road in which one may choose where to walk according to circumstances. Likewise, while the principle of the *Hinayana* consists in withdrawing from the stimuli that activate the passions, which is achieved far more easily if one adopts the monastic lifestyle, the *Mahayana* puts great emphasis on the application of antidotes in order to neutralize the passions that have *already* been activated.²³⁸ Thus one can practice the *Bodhisattva* Path with considerable ease without radically having to change one's way of life, as shown by the lifestyle of the great lay practitioner, the Lichchavi Vimalakirti, hero of the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*.²³⁹

Furthermore, since the goal of the *Mahayana* is the attainment of Buddhahood, this vehicle developed the doctrines concerning this final Fruit far beyond the scope they had in the *Hinayana*. In preceding chapters the terms *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*, nonexistent in the *Hinayana*, recurred frequently. These are proper to the *Mahayana*, the *Vajrayana* and *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*, all of which distinguish these three aspects in the undivided continuum of Buddhahood. According to the *Mahayana*, in particular, the *dharmakaya* or mental aspect of Buddhahood is the same for all Buddhas, while the other two—the *sambhogakaya* or energy aspect (symbolized by the voice), and the *nirmanakaya* or material aspect—which together correspond to the *rupakaya* or "form aspect," are what distinguish each Buddha from the others.²⁴⁰

As we have seen in previous chapters, the *Mahayana* is subdivided into the gradual Path of bodhisattvas or *Bodhisattvayana*, and the sudden *Mahayana*.

Essence of the View of the Gradual Path of Bodhisattvas

According to the *Rigpa Rangshar Tantra*,ⁱⁱ in the *bodhisattva* vehicle the entrance consists in the two truths: the absolute and the relative. As Padmasambhavaⁱⁱⁱ noted, on the level of absolute truth all phenomena of *samsara* and metaphenomena of *nirvana*²⁴¹ lack self-existence or substance. Yet, at the relative level they manifest like a magical illusion, with their own distinct characteristics. Followers of this vehicle claim that by practicing the ten transcendences (Skt., *paramita*; Tib., *pharphyin*^{iv}) they progress through the ten levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) and thus reach supreme Awakening.

Rongzompa^v remarks that bodhisattvas are so called because they "aspire with great courage" (*sattva*) to Awakening (*bodhi*^{vi}) and are stable in their intention, or because the objects of their interest are Awakening and sentient beings. Any being (which here translates the Sanskrit *sattva*) having *bodhichitta*, defined as the union of

ⁱ Luk, Charles (Upashaka Lü Kuan Yu), translator, 1972.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 5, p. 512, 5. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 157.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 6, p. 163,2. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 155.

^{iv} *Phar-phyin* or, in the complete form of the term, *pha-rol-tu phyin-pa*.

^v Tibetan Text 4, pp. 199, 5 and 200, 2. Cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 157.

^{vi} Pali, *bodhi*; Tib., changchub [*byang-chub*]; Chin., *p'u-t'i*; Jpn., *bodai*.

discriminative wisdom (Skt., *prajñā*; Tib., sherabⁱ) and compassion (Skt., *karuṇā*; Tib., nyingjeⁱⁱ), is a *bodhisattva*.

In the *Mahayana*, the gradual Path is based on the step-by-step development of *bodhichitta* or “Mind of Awakening” by means of the practices of the *bodhichitta* of intention and the *bodhichitta* of action.ⁱⁱⁱ²⁴²

The principal elements of the *bodhichitta* of intention are those called the “four immeasurable catalysts of Awakening” (Skt., *chaturaprāmēya*; Tib., tseme zhi^{iv}), which, when listed in the order in which they are presented by a Nyingmapa tradition that at some point was recorded by Andzam Drugpa, are: (1) equanimity (Skt., *upekṣā*; Tib., tang-nyom^v), (2) love or loving kindness (Skt., *maitrī*; Tib., jampa^{vi}), (3) compassion (Skt., *karuṇā*; Tib., nyingje^{vii}), and (4) sympathetic joy (Skt., *mudita*; Tib., ganwa^{viii}) or rejoicing for the good actions, qualities and positive circumstances of others. This order is different from the one taught by Atisha because the Nyingmapa insist that if equanimity is not developed first, then love, compassion and rejoicing will fall into partiality and therefore will not be immeasurable.²⁴³ These four immeasurables are antidotes to some of our most ingrained wayward mental attitudes.²⁴⁴

The *bodhichitta* of action consists of the six or ten *paramita* or “transcendences;” when six of them are enumerated, these are: (1) generosity (Skt., *dāna*; Tib., jinpa^{ix}), (2) discipline and morality (Skt., *śīla*; Tib., tsültrim^x), (3) forbearance (Skt., *kṣānti*; Tib., zöpa^{xi}), (4) perseverance (Skt., *vīrya*; Tib., tsöndrū^{xii}), (5) stable mental absorption (Skt., *dhyāna*; Tib., samten^{xiii}), and (6) discriminating wisdom (Skt., *prajñā*; Tib., sherab^{xiv}). When ten are enumerated, the following four are added: (7) method or skillful means (Skt., *upāya*; Tib., thab^{xv}), (8) aspiration (Skt., *prāṇidhāna*; Tib., mönlam^{xvi}), (9) effort or power (Skt., *bala*; Tib., tob^{xvii}), and (10) primordial gnosis (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., yeshe^{xviii}).²⁴⁵ It must be noted that when only six paramitas are listed, the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth are subsumed in the sixth (so that *prajñā* includes *jñāna* and so on). These six or ten elements of application are antidotes to our inveterate, wayward modes of conduct.²⁴⁶

It is well known that in the *Mahayana* and higher vehicles the Path and the Fruit are explained in terms of the inseparability of discriminating wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*; Tib.,

ⁱ *Shes-rab*.

ⁱⁱ *sNying-rje*: *snying* means “heart,” while *rje* may be translated as “soft and noble.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 108.

^{iv} *Tshad-med bzhi*.

^v *bTang-snyoms*.

^{vi} *Byams-pa*.

^{vii} *sNying-rje*.

^{viii} *dGa’-ba*.

^{ix} *sByin pa*.

^x *Tshul khrims*.

^{xi} *bZod pa*.

^{xii} *brTson ’grus*.

^{xiii} *bSam gtan*.

^{xiv} *Shes-rab*.

^{xv} *Thabs*.

^{xvi} *sMon-lam*.

^{xvii} *sTobs*.

^{xviii} *Ye-shes*.

sherab) and method or skillful means (Skt., *upaya*; Tib., *thab*), known in Sanskrit as *prajñopaya*. Awakening or *bodhichitta* is compared to a bird, and these two aspects are compared to the two wings necessary for the bird to fly: if there is no wisdom there can be no method (and so if it appears that there is method that is a false appearance), and if there is no method that means that there is no true wisdom. In their turn, the causal vehicles (*hetuyana*) claim that Awakening is always the result of the accumulations of merit (Skt., *punya*; Skt., *sönam*) and wisdom (Skt. *prajña*; Tib., *sherab*). In order to show how these two pairs of complementary elements combine on the Path, it must be noted that, among the six *paramita*, the first five, which correspond to method or *upaya*, result in the accumulation of merit or *punya*, while the sixth, corresponding to wisdom, results in the accumulation of wisdom or *prajña*. The pair of complementary aspects consisting of emptiness and compassion is also related intimately to the one consisting of method and wisdom, for just as emptiness may be said to be somehow the “content” of discriminating wisdom or *prajña*, compassion may be said to be the source of method or *upaya* (which in a sense may be viewed as the function of compassion). Finally, it must be remarked that discriminating wisdom or *prajña* may be relative or absolute, and that, likewise, compassion may be of the relative, referential type that is developed as one of the four immeasurables, or of an absolute, nonreferential type that cannot be produced through training, for it can only arise spontaneously as absolute *prajña* is realized (i.e., when the third Path and first level of the *bodhisattva* Path are reached).

Relative *prajña*, which develops step by step on the gradual Path, is one of the fifty-one mental factors or mental events (in Sanskrit, *chaitasika*; in Tibetan, *semjung*ⁱ) that, according to the teachings of the *Abhidharma*, manifest in the conditioned, delusory states of *samsara*: it is the intelligence that allows for the correct comprehension of the teachings. Relative *bodhichitta* is basically the *bodhisattva*’s aspiration to attain Buddhahood in order to truly benefit sentient beings, and its arising marks the beginning of the *bodhisattva* Path. This type of *bodhichitta*, which involves relative *prajña*, referential compassion and the whole of the qualities that arise out of the practice of the methods of the *bodhichitta* of intention and the *bodhichitta* of action, is progressively developed from the very outset of the Path through the intentional, conditioned and conditioning practice of the four immeasurables of the *bodhichitta* of intention and the six or ten *paramita* of the *bodhichitta* of action.

In turn, according to the sutras of the *Prajñaparamita*, absolute *prajña* is the unconditioned wisdom that directly and nakedly apprehends absolute truth, demonstrating that there is no inherent, absolute or substantial existence either in entities that are human beings or in entities that are not human beings, and taking us beyond the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* and beyond *samsara*. It is said to arise in the context of the practices of the *paramita* of discriminative wisdom or *prajña* and some of the related practices of insight meditation (Pali, *vipassana*; Skt., *vipashyana*; Tib., *lhantong*ⁱⁱ; Chinese, *kuan*).

As we have seen, the gradual vehicles of the *Sutrayana*, which are the two that make up the *Hinayana*, and the vehicle corresponding to the *Bodhisattvayana*, posit five paths or *marga*. In the *Mahayana* these are explained as follows: (1) The path of

ⁱ *Sems-byung*.

ⁱⁱ *Lhag-mthong*.

accumulation (Skt., *sambhara marga*; Tib., *tsoglam*ⁱ) is entered upon generation of relative *bodhichitta*; its essence lies in the accumulation of merits (Skt., *punya*; Tib., *sönam*ⁱⁱ) and wisdom (Skt., *prajña*; Tib., *sherab*), as well as in the thorough abandonings (Skt., *samyak-prahana*; Tib., *yangdak par pongwa*ⁱⁱⁱ) whereby four factors of virtue are developed through meditation and moral training.²⁴⁷ (2) The path of preparation or application (*prayoga marga*) is attained when the union of mental pacification and insight (*shamatha-vipashyana-yuganaddha*) is attained, and it involves going through four levels which culminate with overcoming the fear of voidness that bars the way to the next path, and closing the doors to lower realms.²⁴⁸ (3) The path of Vision (*darshana marga*), as we have seen, is the entrance to the Path in a truer and more thorough sense than the how one is said to enter it at the onset of the practice; in the Mahayana this is said to mean one has directly realized the ultimate truth and thus has begun Seeing through the conditioned and made into its unconditioned and unmade nature, which is the essence of the Path in the truest sense of the word (for it is this that allows one to effectively proceed toward definitive Buddhahood), and that one has attained absolute *bodhichitta*, consisting in the indivisibility of emptiness and compassion.²⁴⁹ (4) The path of Contemplation (*bhavana marga*) involves the development of the realization obtained in the previous path; in it, by Seeing through the conditioned and made contents of experience into the unconditioned and unmade nature, one gradually progresses from the second to the tenth level or *bhumi*. (5) Finally, the path of no more learning (*ashaiksha marga*) is said to consist in the attainment of the final Fruit that is *anuttara samyak sambodhi*, whereby one becomes a *Samyak-sambuddha* or fully Awake One.

The last three of the above paths are in their turn divided into eleven levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*): (i) The manifestation of absolute *prajña* and absolute *bodhichitta* marks the transition to the path of Vision,²⁵⁰ corresponding to the first level or *bhumi*, known as “joyous” (Skt., *pramudita*; Tib., *rabtu ganwa*^{iv}). (ii) The levels or *bhumi* that go from two to ten, which are divisions of the path of Contemplation, are: (2) “stainless” [Skt., *vimala*; Tib., *drima mepa*^v], (3) “illuminating” [Skt., *prabhakari*; Tib., *öje*^{vi}], (4) “flaming” [Skt., *archimasti*; Tib., *trowa*^{vii}], (5) “difficult to achieve” [Skt., *sudurjaya*; Tib., *jang kawa*^{viii}], (6) “manifest” or “realized” [*abhimukhi*; ngöndu *jepa*^{ix}], (7) “far gone” [Skt., *durangama*; Tib., *ringdu songwa*^x], (8) “immovable” [Skt., *achala*; Tib., *migyowa*^{xi}], (9) “supreme intelligence” [Skt., *sadhumati*; Tib., *legpe lodrö*^{xii}], and (10) “cloud of *dharma*” [Skt., *dharmamega*; Tib., *chökyi drinpa*^{xiii}]. (iii) Finally, the eleventh *bhumi*, known as “all-

ⁱ *Tshogs-lam*.

ⁱⁱ *bSod-nams*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Yang dag par spong ba*.

^{iv} *Rab-tu dga'-ba*.

^v *Dri-ma med-pa*.

^{vi} *'Od-byed*.

^{vii} *'Phro-ba*.

^{viii} *sByang dka'-ba*.

^{ix} *mNgon-du byed-pa*.

^x *Ring-du song-ba*.

^{xi} *Mi-gyo-ba*.

^{xii} *Legs-pa'i blo-gros*.

^{xiii} *Chos-kyi sprin-pa*.

pervading light” [Skt., *samantaprabha*; Tib., kuntu öⁱ], corresponds to the path of “No-more learning” and the attainment of Buddhahood.

Thus, in a very general way, it may be said that access to the path of Vision and the corresponding first *bhumi*—the “joyful”—takes place when, relative *prajña* having successfully developed, at some point absolute *prajña* or absolute wisdom manifests, unveiling the content of this *prajña*, which is emptiness or voidness (*shunyata*). This concept is understood differently by the various philosophical schools of the Mahayana; the *Madhyamaka* Rangtongpa (*Prasangika* and *Swatantrika*) understand it in the sense of *swabhava shunyata* or “absence of self-nature”—which in its turn may be defined as the insubstantiality of everything that individuals possessed by the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa wrongly experience and consider to be substantial.²⁵¹ Though the teachings of the Nyingmapa agree that all phenomena lack a self-nature and a substance, according to many Nyingma teachings reducing voidness to a mere absence would be an instance of nihilism, and identifying absolute truth with such an absence would imply that this truth cannot account for the manifestation of Awakening, or even for the manifestation of phenomena; therefore, they explain voidness as lying in the recognition of the absence of mental constructs that is inherent in the essence of mind in which space and awareness are indivisible, and define absolute truth as consisting in the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances, or of emptiness and awareness.ⁱⁱ

In the previous paths, the *bodhisattva* who reaches the path of Vision and the corresponding first *bhumi* must have developed relative, referential compassion and the other qualities that make up the four immeasurables and the conditioned aspects of the six or ten paramitas. However, it is upon the discovery of emptiness or voidness that marks the transition to the path of Seeing and that represents the upsurge of absolute *prajña*, that the absolute, nonreferential compassion that embraces all beings may spontaneously manifest: this is why emptiness and nonreferential compassion are said to be inseparable, and why their inseparability, which is absolute *bodhichitta*, is said to first arise in the path of Vision and the corresponding “joyful” *bhumi*. It may seem that it would be absurd to experience compassion while Seeing that ultimately there are no beings and there is no suffering; however, in fact what is called nonreferential compassion is the all-embracing warmth, empathy and responsiveness that arise spontaneously from the direct realization of absolute truth corresponding to ultimate *prajña*, and hence absolute *prajña* and nonreferential compassion may be said to be a single reality that may be compared to the single moon that a squinting fool or drunkard perceives as two moons.²⁵² (Though it has been repeatedly stated that absolute *prajña* arises on the third path, corresponding to the first level, it is also possible to focus on the *full realization and perfection* of the paramitas or transcendences, and explain each of these as being completed in one of the levels; in this perspective, the transcendence of wisdom or *prajña* corresponds to the sixth level, which is when it is said to fully mature. The note lists the correspondences between levels and paramitas in this sense.²⁵³)

The *bodhisattva*’s development through the levels on the gradual Path may also be understood in terms of the overcoming of the two types of obstacles that keep beings in *samsara* and prevent Awakening. The first type of obstacle is that of the passions (Skt.,

ⁱ *Kun-tu-’od*.

ⁱⁱ For a discussion of the various views of voidness in the Mahayana see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

kleshavarana; Tib., nyöndribⁱ),²⁵⁴ which being self-evident need not be explained and that is said to be overcome on passing from the seventh to the eighth level or *bhumi*. The second type of obstacle is that of knowledge (Skt., *jñeyavarana*; Tib., shedribⁱⁱ),²⁵⁵ which may be exemplified by the case of an archer who, upon shooting, takes his own self as object and knows it as shooting, thereby giving rise to a slight jerk that sends the arrow astray (which, as we have seen, is due to the fact that the subject for an instant becomes an object, which hinders the flow of spontaneity of our true nature)—and which is overcome on passing from the tenth to the eleventh level or *bhumi*.²⁵⁶ Once the two types of obstacles have been overcome, the individual becomes established in what this vehicle views as the supreme realization of Buddhahood.²⁵⁷

It is on the basis of the *bodhisattva*'s progress through the paths or *marga* and the levels or *bhumi* that the classifications of the different types of “truth” posited by higher *Madhyamaka* Rangtongpa philosophy should be understood. In fact, inverted relative truth corresponds to the experience of those who have not yet reached the third path/first level of the *bodhisattva* career, for they are totally possessed by delusion and, unaware that they are deluded, take their delusory perceptions and conceptual interpretations to be perfectly sound. Correct relative truth corresponds to the post-Contemplation or jethobⁱⁱⁱ²⁵⁸ state of the *bodhisattva* on the third and fourth paths (or, which is the same thing, from the first to the tenth *bhumi*); though in this state entities are still perceived as existing absolutely and substantially, this false appearance is lighter or milder than in the normal individual, as there is some awareness of the apparitional nature of those entities, which becomes more and more pronounced as the *bodhisattva* advances through the levels, *bhumi* or *sa*. In turn, (provisional) absolute truth corresponds to the Contemplation or nyamzhak^{iv}²⁵⁹ state of the *bodhisattva* in the third and fourth paths, for in this state she or he has a bare, direct apprehension of the *dharmata* that is the true, unconditioned and unmade nature of the whole of reality. Finally, definitive absolute truth is characteristic of the Buddhas, who are those who have become established on the fifth path, corresponding to the eleventh level. (For a far more lengthy discussion of this and an explanation of it in terms of the categories common to the Zhentongpa and *Mahamadhyamaka* sub-schools of *Madhyamaka* philosophy, the reader is directed to Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)

To sum up the essence of this section, the following are the so-called “seven superiorities of the *Bodhisattvayana*:”

- (1) Attention directed to *Mahayana* Scriptures
- (2) Practice for one's realization and that of others
- (3) Wisdom of understanding twofold absence of self-nature
- (4) Perseverance in engagement
- (5) Skill in method
- (6) Perfection of the supreme qualities of the Buddhas
- (7) Spontaneous and uninterrupted spiritual activities (thinle^v)

ⁱ *Nyon-sgrib*.

ⁱⁱ *Shes-sgrib*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *rJes-thob*; in Sanskrit, *prishthalabdhā*.

^{iv} *mNyam-bzhag*; in Sanskrit, *samāhita*.

^v *Phrin-las*.

To conclude, it must be noted that, with regard to the *Bodhisattvayana*, the *Kunche Gyälpo* reads:ⁱ

In the sutras of the *Bodhisattvayana*,
with the intention [of attaining] the [eleventh] level of total light
through the concepts and analysis of the two truths,
it is asserted that the ultimate nature is emptiness like space.
[Conversely,] the great bliss of *Atiyoga*
is the *bodhichitta* free from concepts and analysis.
The [view with] concepts and analysis in Dzogpa Chenpo
is a diversion to the sutras.

Lam-rim: The “Path by Stages”

Tibetan traditions do not teach or practice the *Hinayana* as a self-contained vehicle with its own views and aims, exclusive of all other vehicles, but in the context of what they call the “gradual Path” or “Path by stages” (Skt., *pathakrama*; Tib., lamrimⁱⁱ), in which the practitioner goes successively through a *Hinayana* stage, a *Mahayana* stage, and a *Vajrayana* stage, and is supposed to reach full realization as the practices of the *Vajrayana* are brought to fruition. In each of the stages the practitioner engages in a set of practices proper to the vehicle being practiced; however, the tenets on which this Path as a whole is based, as well as the aim it pursues, are based on the common ground the *Mahayana* shares with the *Vajra* vehicles.

The Tibetan lamrim tradition, which emphasizes the teachings Atisha introduced into Tibet, was first codified in Gampopa’s *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. Later on, Je Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelugpa School, produced a variant of this tradition that did away with those elements of Gampopa’s exposition that in his view contradicted the tenets of the *Madhyamaka Prasangika*, and turned it into the backbone of Gelugpa practice. Though The Master who introduced Buddhist Dzogchen into our world, Tönpaⁱⁱⁱ or Primordial Revealer Garab Dorje,^{iv} did not introduce Dzogchen as the culmination of previous teachings, but directly, and though in the first dissemination of the doctrine in Tibet the lamrim was not taught, with the passing of time even the Nyingmapa produced elaborate lamrim expositions of their own Path—which, with some outstanding exceptions, have become standardized.

In the *Hinayana* stage of the lamrim Path, emphasis is placed on Refuge (which will be considered further on) and on what are called the “four reflections that cause the mind to turn from *samsara* to *nirvana*.” Among these, the first two, which are interrelated, are: (1) reflection on the value of the precious human existence and the difficulty of obtaining it,²⁶⁰ and (2) reflection on the impermanence of all that is born or

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 179; Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, pp. 295-296; Tulku Thöndup, 1996, 1st ed. 1989, p. 95. I have synthesized these translations and modified the terminology in order to make it agree with the one used throughout this book.

ⁱⁱ *Lam-rim*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sTon-pa*. The term “tönpa” literally means “Revealer;” however, the term does not refer to those who reveal terms (*gter-ma*), but to those who reveal a complete system of Awakening at a time when previous systems have disappeared.

^{iv} *dGa’-rab rDo-rje*.

produced. The sequence of these two reflections is owing to the fact that the second would not have the desired effect if one were not already conscious of the opportunities a precious human existence offers and of how difficult it is to obtain a human birth; their combination is said to have the function of “urging the horse of diligence with the whip of impermanence.” The next two are also interrelated; it is for that reason that a Nyingmapa tradition compiled by the great Dzogchen Master Longchen Rabjampaⁱ reversed the order in which Atisha Dipankara Shri-Jñāna taught them, placing as (3) the reflection on the unsatisfactory nature and suffering of *samsara* and its different realms, and as (4) the reflection on the law of cause and effect: the latter will be truly effective only if one is already aware of the inherently unsatisfactory nature of *samsara* and of the sufferings that characterize each and all of its realms.ⁱⁱ

In the cycle of Dzogchen Nyingthikⁱⁱⁱ²⁶¹ teachings, there is a series of successive reflections called “the seven mind trainings” or seven lojong^{iv}, the effect of which is similar to the one attributed to the “four reflections:” that of causing one’s mind to become integrated with the meaning of the teaching.²⁶² With regard to these trainings, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu writes:^v

Among all the series of mind trainings used as basic practices in *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* the ‘seven mind trainings’ belonging to the texts of *Dzogchen Nyingthik* are distinguished because they are easier for beginners to apply than those of other systems and at the same time are also more effective. These are:

1. Training the mind in the thought that everything compounded is impermanent.
2. Training the mind in the thought that all actions are the cause of suffering.
3. Training the mind in the thought of how we are beguiled by diverse secondary causes.
4. Training the mind in the thought that all the actions of this life are meaningless.
5. Training the mind by reflecting on the Fruit of supreme liberation.
6. Training the mind by reflecting on the value of the teachings of one’s teacher.
7. Training the mind by means of meditative stability of the state beyond thought.

Whoever practices these seven trainings will easily succeed, first of all to enter the deep and swift Path of *Atiyoga*, then to put into practice without difficulty its fundamental points, and finally to integrate their mind with the teaching. Thanks to their qualities and special functions, all *Atiyoga* teachers in recent times are accustomed to usher beginners into the *Ati* teaching through the practice of these seven trainings.

In the *Mahayana* stage of the step-by-step Path, the emphasis is on the *bodhichitta* commitment, the practice of the “four immeasurables” of the *bodhichitta* of intention, which have already been considered, and the application in daily life of the six or ten

ⁱ *kLong-chen Rab-'byams-pa*.

ⁱⁱ For an exposition in English, see Longchenpa, translated and annotated by Herbert V. Guenther, 1975, vol. I.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sNying-thig*.

^{iv} *bLo-sbyong*; the complete title of the series is lojong dōn dünma (*blo-sbyong don-bdun-ma*). For an explanation of the seven lojongs, see, among other works: Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, and Padmasambhava and Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, English 1995.

^v Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 39-40.

paramita of the *bodhichitta* of action. These will not be considered here, as they were outlined in the discussion of the *Mahayana qua* vehicle.

Then in the *Vajrayana* stage one first does some specific practices belonging to the outer or lower Tantras, and only after this is one allowed to practice the inner or higher Tantras. In the practice of Tibetan schools, the lamrim Path is intimately related with the course of preparatory practices known as ngöndro, which will be considered later on, and which also involves successive sets of practices belonging to progressively “higher” vehicles (some of which are the same as those of the lamrim), which many teachers regard as a precondition for giving initiations and teachings of inner or higher *Tantra*.

The Sudden *Mahayana*: The *Tun-men* or Tönmun Tradition

According to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, the sudden *Mahayana* (Chinese, *tun-men*; Tib., tönmun)²⁶³ goes back to the “Silent Sermon” in which, instead of preaching to his audience, Shakyamuni held a flower in his hand and kept silent, gazing in the direction of his disciples in the state that makes the Fruit of Buddhahood evident. Though no one else understood what was going on, Mahakashyapa instantly “entered” the state of the Buddha and smiled, receiving the latter’s “transmission of mind.” This was the onset of what *Ch’an* or *Zen* calls “a transmission parallel to that of the scriptures, but different from it.”

Despite being a living transmission beyond doctrinal sources, *Ch’an* or *Zen* cherishes dearly those sutras of the Second and Third Promulgations that, while being among the canonical sources of the Indian gradual *Mahayana*, nonetheless contain elements that lend themselves to a “sudden” interpretation, and which therefore the Chinese Sudden School regards as a confirmation that its teachings and transmission go back to Buddha Shakyamuni. Among the Sutras taught in the Second Promulgation, the *Prajñāparamita Hridaya* or Essential *Prajñāparamita Sutra* is recited daily in *Zen* monasteries, and the *Vajrachhedika* is so appreciated by this school that when its most important text, which is the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, was published in English, the *Vajrachhedika* was included in the same volume.²⁶⁴ The *Lankavatara*, an extremely essential *sutra* of the Third Promulgation, provides an explanation of the mental occurrences supposed to be behind instantaneous Awakening. The *Surangama* describes the methods whereby the great bodhisattvas attained Awakening; some such methods, and in particular that of Avalokiteshwara, is extremely effective for introducing the absolute condition in an instantaneous way. As we have seen, the *Buddhavatamsaka* refers to an instantaneous method by means of which disciples of the greatest capacity can grasp in an immediate way the true condition of everything that exists, and also the *Nirvana* and the *Saddharmapundarika* contain sudden elements, which led the Chinese schools based on them to posit and teach both a gradual Path and an instantaneous one. *Ch’an* and *Zen* also hold in great esteem the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa*.²⁶⁵ These, however, are not the only sutras to provide a doctrinal basis to sudden Awakening. Nubchen Sangye Yeshe’s *Samten Migdrön* (57-29a, 2) reads:

ⁱ Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969.

ⁱⁱ Luk, Charles (Upashaka Lü Kuan Yu), translator, 1972.

From the very beginning, without alternation one engages directly in attaining the absolute unborn state. The *Prajñāparamitasūtra* [of the Second Promulgation] states: “From the very beginning, the moment one generates *bodhichitta*, one must aim for total omniscience.” And, further: “As soon as they have generated *bodhichitta*, beginners must engage assiduously in training themselves [to apprehend] all dharmas nonconceptually.”

Furthermore, the *Peak Sutra* (*Tsug Torgyi Do*ⁱ) reads: “If from the beginning one cultivates [the direct, nonconceptual] understanding [of the state] that transcends birth and cessation, in the end one obtains the Fruit that transcends birth and cessation.”

The fact that *Ch'an* relies on the sutras is confirmed by the following quotation from the *Samten Migdrön* (118-59b, 4), which also provides a brief explanation of the view of the sudden *Mahayana* tradition:

The understanding of the view [is explained] by the example of someone who, having reached the top of a very high mountain, enjoys a global panorama. In fact it is deemed that from the beginning both the objects of analysis and the analyzing [mind] are the reality of the ultimate and unborn nature of phenomena, and that this reality cannot be [the result] of a quest. This understanding is comparable to reaching the peak of Mount Meru, king of mountains, whence one can see all the smaller mountains even without expressly looking at them. But this does not mean that one does not rely on a Master and on the fundamental sutras: it is precisely on the basis of their [teachings] that one explains [the view] through reasoning and scriptural quotations.

This understanding of the view is defined in three points:

- 1) Recognizing that the state beyond action has no limits [is the] essence of the View.
- 2) Recognizing that in the absolute condition of nonduality everything is equal [is the] essence of the absolute [truth].
- 3) Recognizing that, since everything is already present in this state, there is no [sense] in hoping for the Fruit, [is the essence] of Awakening.

This view is elucidated through logical reasoning and scriptures. [We find a fine example of logical reasoning] in the *Instructions on Mind* (*Semlön*ⁱⁱ): “First of all one must properly understand that (the mind) can arise only with dependence on an object and that [analogously] an object can only arise with dependence on the mind [that perceives it]: the knowable and the knower are thus interdependent. Therefore that which appears and seems to exist without interruption is a manifestation of method (Skt., *upaya*; Tib., *thab*), while the true condition of everything, devoid of an own-nature, is *prajña* wisdom (Tib., *sherab*).

The above quotation confirms that, in *Ch'an*, practitioners rely on a Master. In fact, the degree to which this is so distinguishes the Sudden School from the Gradual *Mahayana*: up to the present time, each generation has depended on the preceding one for the transmission of the Awake state, in a line going back to Shakyamuni himself. According to the *Sūtra of Hui-neng*, from Mahakashyapa the transmission of the Sudden School was passed down in India for many generations, counting among its links some of the most decisive teachers of the gradual *Mahayana*, such as Ashvagosha, Nagarjuna (the founder of the *Madhyamaka* School), Aryadeva²⁶⁶ (Nagarjuna's disciple and associate, here referred to as Kanadeva),²⁶⁷ and Vasubandhu (who collaborated with his brother and his brother's teacher, founders of the *Yogachara* School, in developing this system). Then

ⁱ *gTsug gtor gyi mdo*.

ⁱⁱ *Sems lon*.

at some point the transmission reached Bodhidharma, who traveled to China, where he communicated it to his Chinese disciple, Hui K'o, creating the conditions for it to continue to be passed down among Chinese Masters. Later on, Masters from Tibet, and then from Korea and Japan (and later on also from Vietnam), brought it to their own countries, where they passed it down to their disciples (in Tibet, however, this school was banished after the debate of Samye). Finally, in the twentieth century it began to be received by Westerners as well.

The fact that some of the most important Masters of the gradual *Mahayana* were links in the transmission lineage of the Sudden School suggests that *Ch'an* or *Zen* was the inner practice of many Indian Masters who officially taught the Gradual System.²⁶⁸ Similarly, in Tibet, among the early Nyingmapa, Namkhai Nyingpo was a Master of both *Ch'an* and Dzogchen, and Aro Yeshe Jungneⁱ was the seventh link in both the Tibetan *Ch'an* and Dzogchen lineages. Likewise, in China some of the most renowned *Ch'an* or *Zen* Masters were at the same time patriarchs or important Masters in the *Ching-t'u* or Pure Land School, the *Hua-yen* School or the *T'ien-t'ai* School.

As we have seen, two of the characteristics of the gradual *Mahayana* are:

(1) Through the practices of the *bodhichitta* of intention and the *bodhichitta* of action one trains to produce the qualities of relative *bodhichitta*, which, therefore, initially are conditioned and made. However, in the training in the *bodhichitta* of action the most essential practice is that of analysis aimed at obtaining the realization of voidness and the manifestation of the absolute *prajña* that Sees into the unconditioned and unborn: it is thus that in this vehicle practitioners are supposed to have access to the state of Contemplation or nyamzhak and that absolute *bodhichitta* is supposed to arise, establishing the "cause" for the subsequent manifestation of the *dharmakaya*.

(2) The state of Contemplation or nyamzhak in which absolute truth is evident is supposed to alternate with that of post-Contemplation or jethob, wherein relative truth and delusion manifest anew, but in which, insofar as Contemplation has reduced the power of delusion and the apparitional character of relative truth has become to some extent evident, this truth is said to be "correct" rather than "inverted." In this condition one must continue to work with the relative in order to develop the qualities of the bodhisattvas and accumulate the merits that, according to this system, when the time comes will give rise to the *rupakaya* (the sum of *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*), so that one may attain full Buddhahood for the benefit of others.

Contrariwise, two basic characteristics of the Sudden system are:

(1) One enters instantaneously into the Awakened state, rather than gradually proceeding through the five paths and eleven levels. In this system, even though one is exhorted to work for the benefit of others, on the grounds that action can only give rise to the made and conditioned, and therefore to the spurious, one is not made to work on the intentional development of the virtues associated with relative *bodhichitta*. Rather, these virtues (including the four immeasurables and the six or ten paramitas) should arise spontaneously as a result of the manifestation of absolute *prajña* and the corresponding unveiling of the unmade and unconditioned, and of the subsequent stabilization of this *prajña*. Consequently, this tradition concentrates almost exclusively on the means that may allow the sudden manifestation of what *Ch'an* Buddhists have designated as the "great body of *prajña*,"²⁶⁹ and subsequently in those that make this *prajña* stable. Once

ⁱ A-ro Ye-shes 'Byung-gnas.

absolute *prajña* has become stable, the “great use of *prajña*” may manifest in the form of the skillful means (Skt., *upaya*; Tib., *thab*) typical of *Ch’an* or *Zen* (apparently untimely actions, unexpected answers and so on).²⁷⁰

(2) As remarked in the first of the above two quotations from the *Samten Migdrön*, in one’s practice there is no alternation of the two truths. This implies that, as noted above, one engages completely in the practices that lead to discovering the absolute condition, and then in stabilizing the absolute unborn state, *without alternating* with the practices of the relative *bodhichitta*. However, above all it means that the state of Contemplation must not alternate with a state of post-Contemplation and so-called “correct relative truth,” for the unborn must be apprehended in the very moment of standing up after a session of sitting Contemplation, and thereafter awareness should not be allowed to wander into the relative.

Japanese Soto *Zen* asserts that the state that manifests in *shikan taza* is “the very state of Buddha,” and also according to Shen-hsiu’s Northern School the wisdom that manifests in the sessions of sitting Contemplation and that must keep its continuity after the end of the session is the *dharmakaya* itself rather than the cause for the subsequent manifestation of the *dharmakaya*. Furthermore, in this system the *rupakaya* is held to arise spontaneously out of the realization and continuity of the *dharmakaya* rather than to result from the accumulation of merits in the relative condition (in fact, Shakyamuni stated in a *sutra* that staying in Contemplation for the time an ant takes to walk from the tip of the nose to the forefront creates far more merits than countless aeons of good deeds).

Ch’an or *Zen* Masters often used statements that radically interpret reality from the standpoint of voidness as a means to pull the carpet from under their interlocutors’ feet, giving them an opportunity to have instantaneous access to the Awake state. For example, upon meeting Bodhidharma, emperor Wu of Liang asked him: “I have built temples and ordained monks; what merit is in this?” The patriarch replied “no merit.”²⁷¹ Such statements often have led Tibetan teachers, particularly in the Gelugpa School, to accuse the *Ch’an* or *Zen* tradition of nihilism on the grounds that it teaches good and evil to be equal, that it disregards the accumulation of merits, and so on. However, we have seen that such statements by *Ch’an* and *Zen* Masters are “other-directed assertions”²⁷² pronounced as skillful means leading the interlocutor beyond intellectual views and into the state of Awakening, rather than meant as definitive, incontrovertibly true statements.²⁷³ In fact, the records and writings of *Ch’an* and *Zen* make it very clear that it is in the state of absolute truth that there are no good and evil and nor merits to accumulate, and thus enjoin those who are possessed by delusion and dualism to carefully observe the law of cause and effect. As a sample, consider the following passages of the *Sutra of Hui-neng*:²⁷⁴

“Learned audience, please follow me and repeat together what I say:

“May we, disciples and so on, be always free from the taints of ignorance and delusion. We repent of all our sins and evil deeds committed under delusion or in ignorance. May they be expiated at once and may they never arise again.

ⁱ Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969, sixth chapter, “On Repentance,” pp. 50-51.

“May we be always free from the taints of arrogance and dishonesty (*asatya*). We repent of all our arrogant behavior and dishonest dealings in the past. May they be expiated at once and may they never arise again.

“May we be always free from the taints of envy and jealousy. We repent of all our sins and evil deeds committed in an envious or jealous spirit. May they be expiated at once and may they never arise again.

“Learned audience, this is what we call ‘formless *Ch’an* Hui’ (‘formless repentance’). Now what is the meaning of *Ch’an*? *Ch’an* refers to the repentance of past sins. To repent of all our past sins and evil deeds committed under delusion, ignorance, arrogance, dishonesty, jealousy, or envy, etc. so as to put an end to all of them is called *Ch’an*. Hui refers to that part of repentance concerning our future conduct. Having realized the nature of our transgression [we make a vow] that hereafter we will put an end to all kinds of evil committed under delusion, ignorance, arrogance, dishonesty, jealousy, or envy, and that we shall never sin again. This is Hui.

“On account of ignorance and delusion, common people do not realize that in repentance they have not only to feel sorrow for their past sins, but also to refrain from sinning in the future. Since they take no heed of their future conduct they commit new sins before the past are expiated. How can we call this ‘repentance’?”

The misgivings of many Tibetans regarding *Ch’an* or *Zen* are to some extent a consequence of the supposed ninth century debate of Samye, which is reputed to have pitted Kamalashila, the disciple of Shantarakshita who represented the Indian gradual *Mahayana* (and in particular one of the two streams of the *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara* School), against a Chinese teacher referred to in the texts as Hwa-shan *Mahayana*, who represented the Sudden *Mahayana* of Shen-hsiu’s Northern School.²⁷⁵ Probably the most ancient of the texts dealing with the debate is the *Lopön Thangyig*ⁱ, written shortly after it took place and then concealed as a “treasure teaching” to be revealed in the future; in it, the Hwa-shan is proclaimed as the winner of the debate. On the other hand, Butönⁱⁱ, who in his *History of the Dharma* had Kamalashila as the victor,ⁱⁱⁱ lived several centuries after the event and, being a Sarmapa, may have had political motives for attributing the victory to the Indian Master. At any rate, once the Sarmapa dominated the political landscape of Tibet, the view that the Indian Master was the victor became a mainstream dogma that has been widely unchallenged in the West since the reception of Tibetan Buddhism. (Furthermore, and perhaps somehow in connection with this, the *Ch’an* or *Zen* schools of our time, which derive from Hui-neng’s Southern school, accuse the Northern school of pursuing a “quietist” deviation, even though the texts of the Northern School found in Tun Huang do not posit a radically different view from that of the *Ch’an* of the Southern School.)

However, the two most highly renowned Dzogchen Masters of the last six hundred years defended the Hwa-shan with words that may also be read as ascribing victory to him. In fact, the great Dzogchen Master Longchen Rabjampa wrote:^{iv}

ⁱ *bLo-pon Thang-yig*.

ⁱⁱ *Bu-ston*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Obermiller, E., 1999.

^{iv} Tibetan Text 9, folio 31a. Quoted in Guenther, Herbert V., 1977.

Although it did not enter the minds of those with an inferior kind of intelligence, what the great teacher Hwa-shan said at the time [of the alleged debate at Samye] was a factual statement.

In Guenther, Herbert V., 1977, we read that, in his turn, the great...ⁱ

Jigme Lingpa openly defends the Hwa-shan and declares (fol. 6b) that what is alleged to be the defect of the Hwa-shan's teaching is actually the quintessence of the *Prajñaparamita* works. As they are the words of the Buddha, only the Buddha himself can decide if Hwa-shan understood them correctly or not.

At any rate, according to Namkhai Nyingpo's *Kathang Dennga* and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's *Samten Migdrön* (which, as we have seen, are the most ancient sources extant of the classification of vehicles outlined in these pages), provided that the practitioner has the adequate capacity, the sudden Path of the *Mahayana* is swifter and more effective than the gradual one.²⁷⁶

The alleged difference between the Northern and the Southern School of Chinese *Ch'an* Buddhism, if it exists at all, may well be an instance of the difference between two different approaches to achieving realization and advancing on the Path that coexist in the Sudden *Mahayana*, which in present-day Japan are represented by the Rinzai and the Soto School.²⁷⁷ The first approach consists in causing the basic contradiction inherent in the dualistic state to turn into extreme conflict, impeding the functioning of this state, while at the same time creating the conditions that will allow the spontaneous, sudden interruption of dualism and delusion in the instantaneous unveiling of the Awake state; if this occurs, *samsara* and *nirvana* are clearly distinguished, and the individual develops a capacity for the sudden liberation of extreme samsaric experiences. In present-day Japan this approach, which makes use of the spontaneous unfolding of loops inbuilt in the inborn human system,²⁷⁸ and in which Awakening itself is not attained through the principle of renunciation (even though the whole Path is applied in the context of the Path of renunciation), emphasizes *koan* (Chinese: *kung-an*) riddles, as well as *dokusan*.²⁷⁹ The second approach, which the Japanese call *mokusho Zen*, is not centered on seeking such a sudden breakthrough, but in what is named *shikantaza*, which consists in dwelling in the state of Contemplation that this type of *Zen* asserts to be the very state of Buddhahood; however, insofar as the state the disciple dwells in was not attained by means of an instantaneous breakthrough resulting in a clear distinction of *samsara* and *nirvana*, the practitioner does not have an absolute guarantee that the state he or she is dwelling in, is in fact the nirvanic condition of Awakening: in such conditions it is extremely easy to take absorptions wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are manifest, or even samsaric states such as the grasping at the base-of-all and the ensuing absorptions of the *arupa loka*, for Buddhahood itself. Many Masters of both the Rinzai and the Soto schools combine the two methods, and apply skillful means such as the dialogues called *mondo*, as well as those apparently strange actions that so often have resulted in the sudden Awakening of their disciples.²⁸⁰ In particular, Suzuki Roshi, the Master of Soto *Zen* who had settled in California, wrote that in Japan the Rinzai method is viewed as the Path of

ⁱ Tibetan Text 10, folio 6b, quoted in Guenther, Herbert V., 1977.

the younger brother, deemed to be brighter and of keener intelligence than the elder one, whereas the Soto method was said to be the Path of the elder brother.ⁱ

Furthermore, though the sudden *Mahayana* is part of the Path of renunciation, and though, as we have seen, it originated directly from *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni, the monastic precepts and lineage of ordination of *Ch'an* or *Zen* monks and nuns is not that of the *Vinaya*: this is why there was no impediment to their tilling land, so that they would not need to be dependent on the labor of others, and also why it is so common in modern Japan to find *Zen* Masters who, despite being monks, have a spouse. In fact, as we have also seen, in *Ch'an* or *Zen* the *bodhisattva* Vimalakirti, hero of the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*,ⁱⁱ who was a layman and who had more than one consort, often is held up as the model of ideal conduct.

The presentation of each of the vehicles in Part One of this book concludes with a quotation from the *Kunche Gyälpo*, root *Tantra* of the Dzogchen Semde, in which the main drawback of the vehicle being dealt with is denounced. Since this *Tantra* does not refer to the sudden *Mahayana*, this section will use instead the commentaries in this regard made by Namkhai Nyingpo, who was a consummate practitioner of the gradual *Mahayana*, of *Ch'an*, of the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation, and of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*.

In fact, there can be no doubt that Namkhai Nyingpo had perfectly mastered the Contemplation that, according to the sudden *Mahayana*, is the very state of Buddhahood corresponding to the final realization of the gradual *Mahayana*. Well, in his *Kathang Dennga*, this renowned Master explained that the Contemplation of *Ch'an* or *Zen* was somehow partial towards voidness, which implied that it involved a certain degree of directionality, and therefore was not at all the same as the condition of Total Space-Time-Awareness in which the *Vajra* nature becomes perfectly evident, which is the condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection called Dzogchen.

Namkhai Nyingpo illustrated this with two examples. The first is that of a hen pecking at grain; though it may seem that the hen is looking at the ground, it is actually looking at the grains. The second is that of a person threading a needle; though it may seem that the person is looking at the sky, he or she is actually looking at the eye of the needle. The similes are not exact insofar as the ground and the sky are objects of the mind, but they are being used to illustrate the condition beyond the subject-object duality called Dzogchen, characterized by Total Space-Time-Awareness and the absence of any directionality of consciousness (and may also illustrate the *Vajra* nature of the higher Tantras). Though it may seem that the practitioner of *Ch'an* or *Zen* finds him or her self in this condition, the truth is that there is still a certain degree of directionality, a partiality towards voidness that veils the indivisibility of the two aspects of the Base, which, as we will see in a subsequent chapter, are *katak* and *lhundrub*.

However, it is hard to imagine that when a genuine *satori* fully manifests in the context of, say, Rinzai practice, the ensuing condition may involve a partiality toward voidness. And yet this does not mean that *Ch'an* or *Zen* can lead to the same result as Dzogchen: I cannot tell to what degree *Ch'an* or *Zen* can make such a realization stable and uninterrupted,²⁸¹ for that system does not have methods catalyzing the spontaneous liberation of delusion so that it occurs each and every time it manifests, such as those of

ⁱ Suzuki, Shunryu Daiocho, Ed. Trudy Dixon, 1980.

ⁱⁱ Luk, Charles (Upashaka Lü Kuan Yu), translator, 1972.

Tekchöⁱ, and even less so does it have the methods of Thögelⁱⁱ based on the principle of lhundrub having the function of activating the propensities for the manifestation of zhedangⁱⁱⁱ²⁸² and therefore of delusion, in a context in which the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness is extremely high and in which it is forced to liberate itself immediately and spontaneously, so that the wrathful dynamic of the *dharmata* may rapidly burn out *samsara*.²⁸³ At any rate, it is well known to all that so far no *Ch'an* or *Zen* Master has manifested any of the realizations of the *Atiyoga* that involve dissolution of the physical body when the selfless activities characteristic of fully Awake Ones have been completed.

CONCLUSION

No reference has been made so far to the practice of physical *yoga*. This is due to the fact that such a practice is not part of any of the vehicles of the Path of renunciation. Though the name of the *Yogachara* school of *Mahayana* Buddhism means “Conduct of *yoga*,” the *yoga* to which the name refers does not involve physical exercises.

To end this brief consideration of the Path of renunciation, it may be observed that, in vehicles in which the explicit objective is to overcome dualism, as is the case with the *Mahayana*, a method that starts from the prejudice according to which one must avoid a series of entities, activities and psychological states, does not appear to be the most direct and effective. On the one hand, the idea of something to avoid might sustain and reinforce the illusion of a substantial dualism between the one who avoids and what is avoided. On the other hand, it might cause one’s own self to be implicitly taken to be substantial and absolutely important—which would reinforce the self-preoccupation and the illusion of substantiality that all Buddhist Paths and vehicles must lead practitioners to overcome. In the Instantaneous or Sudden *Mahayana*, which here is presented as the supreme form of the *Sutrayana*, the emphasis placed on renunciation seems to be less than in the *Hinayana* and the gradual *Mahayana*; in fact, many texts of *Ch'an* or *Zen* entreat us to apprehend the primordial purity of every thing and of every state that may manifest in our experience.²⁸⁴

However, the above objections do not imply that this Path is not effective; if it were not, the Buddha would not have taught it as a *marga* or Path to Awakening. As we have seen, in this Path realization is not attained through renunciation, which is only the precondition for a practitioner to be able to correctly apply the methods that will result in the manifestation of the unconditioned and unmade. It has been through the latter that many practitioners attained the Fruit of the vehicle they were applying. Therefore, the Path of renunciation is very effective and, in the case of individuals who possess the capacity that corresponds to the practice of one of the vehicles or schools contained in it, but not the capacity necessary for the practice of the vehicles of the Paths of transformation and spontaneous liberation, the former can be “superior” to the latter, in the sense of being swifter and more effective for the purpose of reaching a given degree of spiritual realization.

ⁱ *khregs chod*.

ⁱⁱ *thod rgal*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Zhe-sdang*; Skt., *dwesha*.

THE PATH OF TRANSFORMATION OR “TANTRIC VEHICLE”²⁸⁵

In a broad sense, the Path of transformation is constituted by the various *yanas* or vehicles that make up the *Vajra* vehicle (*Vajrayana*),²⁸⁶ Tantric vehicle (*Tantrayana*), or Secret *Mantra* vehicle (*Guhyamantrayana*). In the Tantric Path, the use of the heavy burden of the passions in order to attain the most precious thing that a human being can yearn for, which is Awakening or Buddhahood, is compared to an alchemist’s transformation of coarse metals into precious metals. In its turn, as we have seen, the use in the Path of transformation properly speaking (the most characteristic manifestation of which is the Path of method [*thablam*]ⁱ existing in the inner Tantras) of the poison of the passions in order to neutralize their root, has been compared to the manufacture of anti-snake serum starting from snake venom, to the homeopathic principle of curing syndromes by applying precisely the agents that induce them, and to the use of poisons in the transformation of metals in alchemy that, as we have just seen, is a simile for the Tantric Path. Furthermore, as the teachings of Path of method warn, such a use of poisons always involves some risk.²⁸⁷

Every passion has two moments: the initial one, in which it is “pure,” and a later one in which it becomes “impure.” Let us take as an example being attacked with words or deeds and the anger this triggers. In the moment immediately following the aggression, a greater clarity manifests in us, for distracting thoughts dissolve and we apprehend the situation with greater precision. However, in the following moment, the energy unchained by the aggression moves on to support thoughts against the aggressor, which distract us, obfuscate us and could lead us to strike back. By instantaneously visualizing ourselves as a wrathful deity in the manner of the *Anuyoga*, we can keep the passion in its first, “pure” moment, so that the energy released by what otherwise might have led us to harm others and ourselves, may be used to keep the visualization present and to undistractedly remain in a nondual state in which aggression—which, like all passions, is an attitude of a subject toward an object and therefore a function of dualism—simply cannot arise. Then, when the energy aroused by the aggression against us subsides, dualism may manifest again, but rather than having accumulated hellish *karma*, through our practice we neutralized to some extent our karmic propensities for hellish experiences.

Something similar occurs in the case of the other passions, for according to the Tantras the true nature of each of them is a primordial wisdom, into which it should be transformed. For example, according to the system of *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, the true nature of ignorance is the wisdom of the *dharmadhatu* or all-encompassing wisdom,²⁸⁸

ⁱ *Thabs lam*.

that of anger is mirror-like wisdom, that of pride is equalizing wisdom, that of desire is discriminating wisdom, and that of jealousy and envy is all-accomplishing wisdom.²⁸⁹

Although the term *Tantra* has the sense of “weft” or “woof” (i.e., woven fabric), its meaning is intimately connected with that of the Sanskrit word *prabandha*, which means both “continuity” and “luminosity.” This is reflected by the Tibetan word used to translate the Sanskrit term *Tantra*, which is *gyü*ⁱ: a term that in everyday language means “thread,” but which in the context of the Tantric and Dzogchen teachings has the twofold meaning of “continuity” and “luminosity.” Jamgön Kongtrül the Great wrote:ⁱⁱ

The word *gyü* (*Tantra*) refers precisely to *bodhichitta*-Samantabhadra that has no beginning or end and that shines with luminous natural clarity. It ‘continues’ because from beginningless time until the attainment of Awakening it is always present without any interruption whatsoever.

Bodhichitta-Samantabhadra is the single, true condition of the whole of reality.²⁹⁰ From the temporal standpoint, the luminous continuity of the manifestation of this true condition is compared to a rosary in which the beads (which represent experiences) and the empty spaces between beads in which there is only thread (which represent the spaces between one experience and the next) constantly succeed each other. Tantrism emphasizes with the continuity of luminosity because in it one works with this succession of beads and spaces between beads: one neither negates the beads (our different experiences) in order to affirm the blankness of the space-between-beads, nor disclaims the blank spaces in order to affirm the beads. In fact, even though all experiences are essentially void (insofar as they lack self-existence or substance), experiences never stop arising; what we have to do is to discover their primordial nature, which is empty but at the same time “luminous” in the sense of “experience-manifesting.” This is one of the reasons why the inner Nyingma Tantras explain our true condition in terms of two indivisible aspects: *katak* or *primordial purity*, corresponding to emptiness,²⁹¹ and *lhundrub* or *spontaneous perfection*, corresponding to spontaneous manifestation and its functionality.

Among the Buddhist schools that transmit Tantric traditions in the broadest sense of the term, there are (I) those that have been preserved in Tibet and its zone of cultural influence, and that have also flourished in China (under the patronage of emperors who followed them, especially in the Yüan or Mongol and Ming dynasties) and (II) the one that came to China across the sea from Indonesia,²⁹² which was called *Mi-tsung* (which also received the patronage of three emperors)²⁹³ and that later was brought to Japan by Kukai (nicknamed Kobo Daishi) under the name “*mantra* school” (Jap., Shingon). (It must be noted that, in Japan, Saicho included the practices of this tradition in the *Tendai* School, which originally was not Tantric.) Among (I) the schools transmitting Tantric traditions preserved in Tibet and its zone of cultural influence, the main ones are: (i) the Old or Nyingmapa School,²⁹⁴ made up of all those who practiced and transmitted the doctrines brought to the “Terrace of the World” mainly in the eighth century CE, and (ii) those called New or Sarmapa schools (established in Tibet in the tenth century AD or afterwards), among which the most widespread are (1) the Kagyüpa, (2) the Sakyapa, and especially (3) the Gelugpa.

ⁱ *rGyud*.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 11, A: vol. 2, p. 613, 2. Quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999, 2001, p. 161.

Even though, as noted above, in a broad sense the Path of transformation is the *Vajrayana* (“immutable Vehicle”), *Mantrayana* (*Mantra* vehicle) or *Tantrayana* (Vehicle of the Tantras), these terms include a number of vehicles that must be classified into two different groups, according to the functional principles on which they are based. These two groups are: (1) what the Old or Nyingmapa School designates as “outer Tantras” and that the New or Sarmapa schools call “lower Tantras,” which make up the Path of purification and that comprise (a) the *Kriyatantra*, (b) the *Ubhayatantra* (called *Charyatantra* in the New or Sarmapa schools), and (c) the *Yogatantra*, and (2) what the Old or Nyingmapa School calls “inner Tantras” and that the New or Sarmapa schools designates as “higher Tantra,” which constitute the Path of transformation properly speaking. (As shown below, some books include *Yogatantra* in the Path of transformation, insofar as it combines elements of the Path of purification with elements of the Path of transformation. However, though this vehicle applies in a way the method of transformation, it does not do so directly, like the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the Sarmapa or the *Mahayogatantra* and *Anuyogatantra* or the Nyingmapa.ⁱ)

THE OUTER OR LOWER TANTRAS

The outer or lower Tantras are practiced equally in all the schools transmitted in Tibet and its zone of cultural influence (in the Old or Nyingmapa School as much as in the New or Sarmapa schools); practices with an analogous principle are also applied in the Chinese Mi-tsung School and in its Japanese offshoot, which, as we saw, is the Shingon School (and as we have also seen, in Japan Saicho included the practices of this tradition in the *Tendai* School, which originally was not Tantric). As remarked above, the three outer Tantras, the first two of which constitute the Path of purification, and the last of which combines the Path of purification with the Path of transformation, are *Kriyatantra*, *Ubhayatantra* (or *Charyatantra*) and *Yogatantra*.

The basis of the Path of purification is the realization that phenomena that appear on the relative level such as the five aggregates or *skandha* (material form, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness), the twelve sense bases or *ayatana* (the six outer constituents, which are the fields of the six sense objects wherein objects are singled out, and the six inner constituents, corresponding to the six sense organs), and the eighteen sense constituents (the twelve sense bases or *ayatana* that have just been enumerated, plus the six modes of sensory consciousness or “six consciousnesses”),²⁹⁵ are subject to being purified, and that the ultimate sphere, consisting in the naturally pure nature of mind, is the basis of the purification aimed at.ⁱⁱ One manifests an outwardly pure livelihood and applies as the Path the meditation on the thatness of deities, with whom one relates in one way or another according to the level of outer *Tantra* one is practicing.

The superiority of the outer Tantras with regard to all forms of the *Sutrayana* Path of renunciation, including the sudden *Mahayana* (*Ch’an* or *Zen*), is said to lie mainly in two facts:

1) The outer Tantras make very clearly the point that our true condition is what they refer to as the *Vajra*-nature, which comprises the three kayas of Buddhahood and that has always been actual—as in the Nyingma interpretation of the *Shrimaladevisimhanada*

ⁱ Personal communication by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu. (Email sent on Sunday, April 6, 2003.)

ⁱⁱ See Tibetan Text 22, f. 60, p. 34b 4. Quoted in Tulku Thöndup, 1996 (1st ed. 1989), p. 15.

Sutra and of Maitreya's *Ratnagotravibhaga* or *Uttaratantra*—rather than being merely a seed of Buddhahood, like some of the conceptions of the *tathagatagarbha* in other sutras of the Third Promulgation, which compare it with a seed that has to sprout and mature into actual Buddhahood thanks to causes and secondary conditions.

2) In the outer Tantras the deity is the manifestation, on the relative plane, of the absolute nature of the *dharmakaya* beyond birth and cessation, and so the relative is the manifestation of the unconditioned nature and the very basis of the Path, rather than being merely an impure, conditioned vision to be overcome. Practice is thus based on the clarity aspect of primordial gnosis (i.e., on what the Dzogchen teachings and the inner Tantras in general call the *lhundrub* or spontaneous perfection aspect of the Base), which is not employed in the *Sutrayana*. Thus it is stated that by means of the ordinary *siddhis* you do not renounce the relative, and that by means of the supreme *siddhi* you realize that the absolute is not something to achieve.ⁱ

Essence of the View of *Kriyatantra*ⁱⁱ

In the absolute there is neither birth nor cessation. Recognizing this absolute in the form of the deity, on the relative plane practitioners meditate on it; therefore, as noted above, the relative is valuable rather than being viewed as an impure vision to overcome. Practitioners of this system assert that in its realization is achieved mainly by means of the combined power of ritual objects and requisites, together with primary and secondary factors of realization: the image of the deity, the symbol of the state of Awakened Mind, recitation of the *mantra*, the norms of cleanliness, observance of the astrological calendar, propitious days and constellations, etc.

Thus it is said that the entrance gate is the three purities (purity of deity and *mandala*, purity of ritual objects and substances, and purity of mantras and concentration), the ablutions and the norms of cleanliness; that the *samaya* involves reciting the *mantra*, not drinking the same water as those who break the *samaya*, and always behaving without distraction; that the ritual action consists in engaging in the three purities; that the view is based on the relationship between deity and practitioner as being respectively lord and subject; that the things to renounce are meat, fish, garlic and other specific vegetables that are used mainly as seasoning,²⁹⁶ and alcoholic beverages; and that there is attachment to the practice of concentration on the deity.

There are two types of *Kriya*: *Kriya* that mainly applies purity, and *Kriya* that mainly applies concentration.

***Kriya* That Mainly Applies Purity**

Starting with the performance of ritual ablutions three times a day and other norms of cleanliness, and consuming the three white substances and three sweet substances,²⁹⁷

ⁱ This 3d point reproduces a quotation of Tibetan Text 12 cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 165.

ⁱⁱ This section is a summary of the corresponding section in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 163-166, which contains quotations from Tibetan Text 6, p. 19, 6; from Tibetan Text 5, p. 515, 5; and from Tibetan Text 12, p. 130, 5. In general, material has been taken from all these texts in the elaboration of this section.

practitioners meditate on their own body as the form of the deity. The superiority of this system over the lower vehicles lies in the fact that everything that appears on the relative plane, without being deemed true, is brought into the Path by means of the three concentrations, which are:

(a) Concentration on the state of Body as the form of deity: All phenomena of form are recognized as the deity of form: without renouncing form, practitioners no longer remain within the conceptual consideration of the limits of unity and multiplicity.

(b) Concentration on the state of Voice as seed syllable: All audible phenomena are recognized as the deity of sound, and so all sounds become the recitation of *mantra*. No longer within conceptual limits of arising and ceasing, each and every sound is heard as the sound of the deity.

(c) Concentration on the state of Mind as symbolic attribute: All thinking is recognized to be the meditation deity, so that thoughts do not deviate from meditative stability, and yet the practitioner does not remain within the limits of the dependently arisen, ordinary relative condition, for nothing arisen or originated (and thus conditioned and made) exists even in the relative sphere.

Regarding the yidam wisdom deity (*jñanasattva*) as lord with awareness that it is the manifestation of the absolute plane, and the practitioner as servant in the form of the promise deity (*samayasattva*), it is said that interruptions abate and siddhis are obtained. The ordinary siddhis imply that the practitioner does not renounce the relative, and the supreme *siddhi* consists in understanding that the absolute is not something to achieve

Kriya That Mainly Relies on Concentration

By means of the stage of creation or *kyerim*ⁱ and the subtle stage of completion or *dzogrim*ⁱⁱ, the practitioner meditates on the deity with the visualization of radiation and reabsorption. Thus he or she comes to concentrate on forms, sounds and thoughts as the Body, Voice and Mind of the deity.

The Dzogchen View of *Kriya*

With regard to the *Kriyatantrayana*, the *Kunche Gyälpo* reads:ⁱⁱⁱ

Followers of *Kriyatantra*, intending to attain the state of Vajradhara,
enter through the doors of the three purities, and
remain with the consideration of a pure subject and a pure object.

[Conversely,] the total bliss of *Atiyoga*
is the pure and total Awake awareness

free from [the duality of] apprehended and apprehender.

That which transcends subject and object is hindered by *Kriya*:
conceiving total completeness / plenitude and perfection in terms of subject and object
amounts to falling into the misleading deviation of *Kriya* practitioners.

ⁱ *bsKyed-rim*.

ⁱⁱ *rDzogs-rim*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 179. See also Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 296; Tulku Thöndup, 1996, 1st ed. 1989, pp. 95-96. I have modified the terminology in order to make it agree with the one used throughout this book.

Essence of the View of *Ubhaya* or *Charya Tantra*ⁱ

In the absolute there is neither birth nor cessation. Recognizing this absolute in the form of the deity, on the relative plane practitioners meditate on it, and so the relative has value and is recognized to be the unconditioned itself rather than being an impure vision to overcome. Practitioners of this system assert that in this way realization is achieved by virtue, both of the concentration based on the “four characteristic conditions,” and of the conjoined power of the ritual objects and requisites together with primary and secondary factors of realization (as explained in the section on *Kriya*) and so on.

Because the *Ubhaya* or “vehicle of the *Tantra* of both” applies the behavior of *Kriya* and has the same view as *Yogatantra*, it is called “the neutral vehicle.” While practitioners of *Kriya* see the relationship between deity and practitioner as being like the one that obtains between lord and subject, and practitioners of *Yoga* must recognize the deity as being (the nature of) their own mind, practitioners of *Ubhaya* see the deity as an elder brother or an elder dharma friend. After having purified body, voice and mind by means of ablutions and the norms of cleanliness, by visualizing the five factors of realization and so on its adherents practice the *sadhana* of the Supreme *Mandala*,²⁹⁸ etc.

In conclusion, the means of realization in *Ubhaya* are: (a) The five factors of realization that will be explained in the section on *Yogatantra*. (b) The concentration that has four characteristic conditions, which are: visualizing oneself in the form of the deity; the deity in front of oneself; the syllables of the *mantra* residing in one’s heart and in the deity’s heart symbolizing inseparability; and recitation of the *mantra*. (c) The ritual objects and requisites and the power of the primary and secondary factors. Practitioners of this system assert that all of this enables realization of the absolute state beyond birth and cessation.

With regard to the *Ubhayatantrayana*, the *Kunche Gyälpo* reads:ⁱⁱ

Followers of *Ubhaya[tantra]* base their conduct on the principle of *Kriya*
and their view and practice on the principle of *Yoga[tantra]*;
[since this prevents them from] integrating view and behavior,
they cannot grasp the meaning of nonduality.

The total bliss of *Atiyoga* is pure and total nondual awareness.

That which is nondual is hindered by *Ubhaya*:
conceiving total completeness / plenitude and perfection in dualistic terms
amounts to falling into the misleading deviation of the followers of *Ubhaya*.

Essence of the View of *Yogatantra*ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ This section is a summary of the corresponding section in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 166-167. The section contains quotations from Tibetan Text 6, p. 19, 7; from Tibetan Text 5, p. 516, 4; and from Tibetan Text 12, p. 132, 4. Material has been taken from all these texts in the preparation of this section.

ⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 179. See also Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, pp. 296; Tulku Thöndup, 1996, 1st ed. 1989, p. 96. I have modified the terminology in order to make it agree with the one used throughout this book.

ⁱⁱⁱ This section is a summary of the corresponding section in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 166-167. The section contains quotations from Tibetan Text 6, p. 20, 1; from Tibetan Text 5, p. 516, 6; and from Tibetan Text 12, p. 133, 1. Material has been taken from all these texts in the elaboration of this section.

According to this highest outer Tantric vehicle of the view and conduct of self-control (as distinct from the inner Tantric vehicles of the view of method),²⁹⁹ without ascribing fundamental importance to external ritual exercises, practitioners meditate on the male and female deities that represent the absolute, unconditioned state beyond birth and cessation, and practice concentration aimed at making their own state as totally pure as that of the deities. In fact, the name of this vehicle, which in Tibetan is *Naljor*ⁱ, is to be understood in terms of the etymology of the Tibetan term, which is “direct realization of our original, unmodified condition.” This is so because the aim of this vehicle is to realize that one’s own mind is the deity—or, in other words, that one’s own mind is in truth the unconditioned and utterly pure nature-of-mind or Base-awareness (Skt., *chittata* or *chitta-eva*; Tib., *semnyi*ⁱⁱ) constituting the absolute condition, which in this practice manifests as the deity. In fact, this is the sense of the term *Vajra* in the term *Vajrayana*,ⁱⁱⁱ as applied when it refers to the Paths of purification and transformation.

Practitioners of this system assert that realization is thus achieved mainly through the *yoga* in which one meditates on the four mudras of the forms of the realized ones. The entrance gate consists in the five factors of realization; the View involves the initial view of the deity and oneself as being like friends or brothers and the final recognition that one’s own mind is the deity; the *samaya* to observe includes the three objects concerning which one must not fail (not failing the Yidam, not failing one’s teacher and spiritual companions, and not failing one’s own mind); and the conduct is supposed to transcend acceptance and rejection (however, in practice one does not at all engage physically in behaviors that the Path of renunciation regards as “impure”). Since all of this is so, and since the object of visualization includes deities in *yab-yum* that arouse passion and at the same time provide means for transforming it, this vehicle is not circumscribed to the Path of purification, but contains elements of the Path of transformation as well (however, as shown by the fact that *yab-yum* is visualized rather than applied physically, this vehicle does not apply the methods of transformation directly).

This system can be subdivided into: the system that mainly applies action, and the system that mainly applies meditation.

The System that Mainly Applies Action

Here one performs the ritual actions (1) of Supreme Action or (2) of the Supreme *Mandala*.³⁰⁰ (1) Is subdivided into: (a) minor action, in which realization is sought by means of one of the ritual practices and which thus involves assiduous worship through offerings, tormas, fire rites, recitation of the essential *mantra* and so on; and (b) supreme action, in which these rituals are practiced as secondary factors for realization of the *mandala* (e.g., performing torma and fire rites five or six times is deemed to enable obtainment of the realization sought). (2) Practitioners of the Supreme *Mandala* maintain that by means of rituals from the earth consecration rite as the base of the *mandala*, up to receiving the initiation, the individual can attain Awakening.

ⁱ *Rnal-'byor*.

ⁱⁱ *Sems-nyid*.

ⁱⁱⁱ This reference to the meaning of the term *vajra* as used in the said Paths was incorporated from a personal communication by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu (email received on April 6, 2003).

The System that Mainly Applies Concentration

Here, after having done the initial meditation of preparation and then the meditation of total purity, whether one meditates on a deity or a *mandala*, it is necessary to develop the visualization by means of the five factors of realization, which are: (1) The factor of realization of method and *prajña* by means of the sun and moon seat that derives from meditation on the sun and moon one on the top of the other on a lotus seat; (2) the factor of realization of the purity of the sense bases by means of the form of the Body complete with ornaments; (3) the factor of realization of the sounds, words and names by means of the *chakra* of the vowels and consonants (*ali kali*) of the Voice; (4) the factor of realization in the dimension of one's specific Buddha family by means of the symbolic attributes of the mind such as the *vajra*, wheel, jewel and so on; (5) the factor of realization of the purity of the ultimate nature of phenomena by means of the pure deity of wisdom or *jñanasattva*.³⁰¹

Practitioners of this system claim that by meditating on the above five, on the outer level the five aggregates and five elements are purified, on the inner level *karma* and the five emotions are purified, and on the secret level the five objects and five senses are purified, so that one realizes the state of Awakening of the five Families.

Meditating on the Yidam and oneself as two siblings or friends and having as the aim of the practice the recognition that one's own mind is the deity, one learns not to expect anything from the deity because the siddhis issue from oneself, and not to expect anything bad from oneself as one's own mind possesses the nature of the deity and the capacity for the manifestation of the latter's illusory body. Acknowledging nonduality between the deity to visualize and oneself, not even the names of relative and absolute any longer exist. These are the reasons for the superiority of this system over the lower vehicles.

Engaging in these practices and in the meditation on the four mudras, which are *Samayamudra*, *Dharmamudra*, *Karmamudra*, and *Mahamudra*, it is possible, according to the view of this system, to achieve the supreme state of the absolute beyond birth and cessation. Concerning the four mudras, it must be noted that the aspect of the Body is the *Mahamudra*, the aspect of the Voice is the *Dharmamudra*, the aspect of the Mind is the *Samayamudra*, and the accomplishment of the actions of radiation and reabsorption etc. is the *Karmamudra*. By means of these, the true, unconditioned nature of one's own three doors (body, speech and mind) is supposed to be realized as these are meditated on as the essence of the Body, Voice, Mind and Activities of the deity. (Concerning the *Mahamudra*, Rongzompa remarks that it is the characteristic symbol of the Body and that it is called "great" because it serves greatly as the cause for remembering the deity and having its presence, and says that according to others it is called "great" because it represents the base of the other mudras.ⁱ)

A Dzogchen Note Concerning *Yogatantra*

ⁱ Tibetan Text 4, p. 239, 6; cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 170.

With regard to the *Yogatantrayana*, the *Kunche Gyälpo* reads:ⁱ

Followers of *Yoga[tantra]*, aspiring to the Beautifully Arrayed [pure land],
And having undertaken [the trainings] with and without characteristics
mainly practice [in terms of] the four mudras.
[Consequently] they cannot apply the principle “beyond acceptance and rejection.”
[Conversely,] the total bliss of *Atiyoga*
is pure and total Awake awareness beyond acceptance and rejection.
The state [that becomes evident when one is] beyond acceptance and rejection
is hindered by *Yoga[tantra]*:
acceptance and rejection with regard to total completeness / plenitude and perfection
amounts to falling into the misleading deviation of the followers of *Yoga[tantra]*.

THE INNER OR HIGHER TANTRAS

Finally, to refer to the highest category of Tantras of the Path of transformation in a broad sense, which are the backbone of the Path of transformation in the narrow, proper sense of the word, the Nyingmapa use the label “inner Tantras,” whereas the Sarmapa apply the term “higher Tantras.”³⁰² After their eradication from India early in the second millennium CE, the Tantras of this category continued to be transmitted solely within the schools established in Tibet and its zone of cultural influence: they are *not* part of the lore of the Chinese Mi-tsung School and/or its Japanese offshoot, the Shingon School.

It is in this category that the differences between the new or Sarmapa system and the old or Nyingmapa system are most pronounced. To begin with, the Sarmapas have a single category of what they refer to as higher *Tantra*, which is the *Anuttarayogatantra*, whereas the Nyingmapas have three categories of what they call inner *Tantra*, the lower two of which, which are the *Mahayogatantra* and the *Anuyogatantra*, are the backbone of the Nyingma Path of transformation properly speaking. Among these, only the *Mahayoga* may be said somehow to correspond to the *Anuttarayoga*; however, this correspondence is loose and far from being complete.

The other two vehicles of inner *Tantra* in the Nyingmapa tradition are deemed “higher” than both the *Mahayogatantras* and the *Anuttarayogatantras*. In particular, the *Anuyogatantra* is deemed “higher” than those vehicles insofar as it is more thoroughly based on the principle of lhundrub (for the transformation practiced in this vehicle is instantaneous rather than gradual) and insofar as it emphasizes the stage of perfection.

Finally, the *Atiyogatantra* is not based on the principle of transformation and therefore our sources do not classify it as belonging to the Path of transformation of the *Vajrayana*, but as constituting the Path of spontaneous liberation that will be considered in the next chapter, which is the Path that makes the most skillful and thorough use possible of the lhundrub aspect of the Base.

The Higher *Tantra* of the Sarmapa: *Anuttarayogatantra*ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 179. See also Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 296; Tulku Thöndup, 1996, 1st ed. 1989, p. 96. I have modified the terminology in order to make it agree with the one used throughout this book.

ⁱⁱ Though in this section I expound the *Anuttarayogatantras* my own way, in it I have included a considerable amount of material from both the section on the *Anuttarayogatantras* and the section on the

Among others, the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the Sarmapa and the *Mahayogatantra* of the Nyingmapa share the following characteristics: (1) in both vehicles one trains to perceive the totality of phenomenal existence as the *mandala* of the deity; (2) in both vehicles, the transformation whereby one visualizes oneself as a deity is practiced in a gradual manner; (3) both contain a “Path of liberation”³⁰³ and a “Path of method,”³⁰⁴ the latter comprising a generation or creation stage (Skt. *utpattikrama*; Tib., *kyerim*ⁱ) in which one develops the visualization of oneself as the deity and of one’s dimension as the *mandala* of the deity, and a perfection or completion stage (Skt., *sampannakrama*; Tib., *dzogrim*ⁱⁱ) in which one contemplates “total bliss” as indivisible from emptiness. In the generation stage, after inducing a state of undifferentiated voidness one gradually builds up the visualization, and as one works with the latter the emphasis is on the inseparability of clarity (which corresponds to the visualization) and emptiness (the deity and the rest of the transformation are to be visualized as being intangible, like a rainbow, and as lacking an independent self-nature).³⁰⁵ In the completion stage, by means of specific practices one contemplates the inseparability of supreme bliss and emptiness: some of these practices are applied in solitude and involve working with the energetic system in connection with physical *yoga* (i.e., with *yantra yoga*) in order to generate bodily heat, while others may comprise erotic union with a consort in which heat is spontaneously generated.³⁰⁶

The practices of the completion stage increase the bio-energetic volume (*kundalini* or *thig-le*), causing the individual’s focus of attention to widen, so that it may become more panoramic and permeable, and thus the insubstantiality or voidness of all entities may more easily and thoroughly be realized. Moreover, according to followers of this vehicle, total pleasure assuages the spasmodic contractions (*stanayogatah*) inherent in craving (*trishna*) and in the illusion of self-existence and substantiality. Most important, and in strict relation to this, the impossibility to apprehend, even in the shortest moment, the flow of bliss that cannot be confined into limits and therefore cannot be conceptualized, and which is like space, reputedly allows one to realize the true meaning of the absence of characteristics equal to space, and thus to achieve the final goal.ⁱⁱⁱ The idea behind this practice is that, given the ungraspable character of the flow of bliss and the concomitant panoramification and permeabilization of the focus of conscious attention, if practitioners question their experience in prescribed ways, there may be a possibility that the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* may spontaneously dissolve, so that the illusion of substantiality may be overcome in the unveiling of the primordial nondual gnosis that discloses the true, unconditioned and unmade condition of our selves and of the entire universe.

In the inner or higher Tantras in general there is even more emphasis than in the *Mahayana*, on the key role the inseparability of (1) method or skillful means (Skt., *upaya*; Tib., *thab*) and (2) *prajña* (Tib., *sherab*) plays in the Path. However, in this context the term *prajña* has a wider sense than in the *Mahayana*, as it also has the implied meaning of

difference between the three classes of Anuttarayogatantras in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 171-174.

ⁱ *bsKyed-rim*.

ⁱⁱ *rDzogs-rim*.

ⁱⁱⁱ These lines on the flow of bliss combine short extracts from various quotations incorporated to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 210-212.

“energy.” The pair consisting of method and *prajña* is at the root of an extremely essential classification of the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa schools: that which divides them into father Tantras, mother Tantras and nondual Tantras. In fact, the criterion for telling whether we are dealing with a father *Tantra* or a mother *Tantra* is whether method or *prajña* are predominant in it: if method preponderates, we are dealing with a father *Tantra*; if *prajña* has the upper hand, we are dealing with a mother *Tantra*. In *Summary of the Wish-fulfilling Treasury* Ju Mipham states:ⁱ

As antidote to the poisons of the three emotions and in conformity with the capacities of individuals etc., the Tantras are subdivided into father, mother and nondual.

The father Tantras of [*Anuttara*]yoga are those Tantras which [place a greater] emphasis [on] the creation stage or kyerim [than on the completion stage or dzogrim, stressing] the sundry ritual actions linked to it in connection with secondary practices; [which teach the practice of] the Illusory Wisdom Body in relation to [the aspects of] vision [and] method;³⁰⁷ [which teach that] the completion stage or dzogrim [is to be practiced] in relation to *prana*, and [which teach] ‘direct action’³⁰⁸ [as the specific action]. They have been transmitted mainly for individuals of irascible character and who love elaborate external activities (i.e., for individuals of lower capacity).

The mother Tantras of [*Anuttara*]yoga are those Tantras which place greater emphasis on the dzogrim [or completion] stage than on the kyerim [or generation stage]; [which favor] the aspect of *prajña* and of emptiness [over] that of method; [which teach] the *yoga* of the Clear Light³⁰⁹ as the means of realization; [which] regarding the Path of Method³¹⁰ [stress the] experiences of pleasure [to be obtained] by means of [the secret instructions on] melting and reabsorbing the seed-essence; and [which teach] ‘conquest’³¹¹ as the specific action. These have been transmitted mainly for those [individuals] of a passionate nature who are able to practice the specific methods [that are to be] applied within their own bodies—that is, [for] individuals of medium capacity.

Finally, the nondual Tantras are those Tantras in which there is balance between the aspects of method and *prajña*, as well as between the kyerim and dzogrim stages, and which mainly consider that our [own natural] state of rigpa-*bodhichitta*,³¹² the single sphere of total wisdom of purity and equality, is the ultimate nature of all phenomena. They are intended for individuals dominated by ignorance and endowed with the higher capacity to apply the principle of freedom from effort.

Thus in father Tantras the generation or creation stage predominates over the stage of completion, and correspondingly clarity is emphasized over pleasure, so that no details of the visualization must be neglected; in the completion stage—some key practices of which are said to be impracticable for women—practice is mainly concerned with *prana*, and in addition the *yoga* of the illusory body is applied, which consists in imagining that one’s own body is intangible, like a ghost or a reflection. Conversely, in mother Tantras the completion stage preponderates and there is no need to emphasize the details of the visualization to the same degree as in the father Tantras, not only because in that stage the experiences of pleasure are more central than those of clarity, but because in general feeling is most emphasized, and therefore in visualization the feeling of being the deity is paramount; in these Tantras, the completion stage is mainly concerned with the seed-essence (Skt., *bindu*) and the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*), both of which are referred to by the single Tibetan word *thig-le* insofar as the

ⁱ Tibetan text 20, p. 992, 2. Cited in Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 172-173.

energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness may be directly proportional to retention of the seed-essence³¹³ (the masculine manifestation of which, in the form of *bindu*, is to be melted and reabsorbed in order to obtain the experiences of pleasure), and in addition one must apply the practice of clear light, which consists in remaining in limitless and formless luminosity.

While the method aspect predominates in father Tantras and the wisdom aspect does so in mother Tantras, in nondual Tantras these two aspects are balanced. As Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu points out,ⁱ in the *Kalachakra Tantra* and in the realization ensuing from its practice, there is no preponderance of either the method aspect or the *prajña* aspect, and therefore this realization is called “the level of realization of the neutral condition of Vajrasattva,” and that *Tantra* is praised as the king of all the different kinds of *Anuttarayogatantra*. The same Master-scholar also points out that the teaching of nondual Tantras contemplates the practice of method and *prajña* and the development and completion stages in the equanimity of the pure dimension, “the total wisdom of the unequalled thigle or single sphere (which is our own natural state of *rigpa-bodhichitta*), the primordial state that is the foundation of all phenomena of existence.” Furthermore, while in other *Anuttarayogatantras* the wisdom state of the fourth initiation is barely mentioned in a veiled manner, in a nondual *Tantra* such as the *Kalachakra*, it is shown openly and clearly.

Je Tsongkhapa posited a different criterion for classifying Tantras, insisting that in father Tantras, a classic example of which is the *Guhyasamaja*, the deity is masculine, the *mantra* spins in a clockwise direction and the practice is done in the daytime, whereas in mother Tantras, like, for example, Vajrayogini, the deity is feminine, the *mantra* spins counterclockwise and the practice is done at night. Based on the fact that there is neither a third sex nor a third direction in which the *mantra* can spin, nor a time other than day or night, Tsongkhapa denied the existence of nondual Tantras. However, the predominance of method or *prajña*, respectively, as the criterion for classifying root texts into father or mother, despite being less concrete and simple than Tsongkhapa’s, seems preferable to those in search of a more profound, comprehensive and accurate understanding. In fact, in terms of the preponderance of method or *prajña*, a classic example of a mother *Tantra* is *Chakrasamvara*, in which the deity is masculine (and therefore, according to the criterion established by Tsongkhapa, should be considered as a father *Tantra*). And, on the same basis, there can be no doubt that there are nondual Tantras, *Kalachakra* being the most important *Tantra* of this category and therefore supreme among *Anuttarayogatantras*.

In spite of the coincidences between the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the New or Sarmapa schools and the *Mahayogatantra* of the Old or Nyingmapa School listed at the beginning of this section, and of the fact that both classes of *Tantra* share some root texts, including the *Guhyasamajatantra* or *Assembly of Secrets*,ⁱⁱ which the Sarmapa schools regard as a father *Tantra*, and the *Root Tantra of the Essence of the Secret Moon*,ⁱⁱⁱ those two systems are far from identical. To begin with, the Mahayogatantras are not classified

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988.

ⁱⁱ Tib., *Sangwa Düpa Gyü* [gSang-ba 'Dus-pa rGyud] or *Pel Sangwa Düpa Gyü* [dPal gSang-ba 'Dus-pa rGyud].

ⁱⁱⁱ Skt., *Shrichandraguhyatilakanamamahatantraraja*; Tib., *Dasang Thigle Gyü* (zLa-gsang Thig-le rGyud) or *Pel Dasang Thigle Tsawe Gyü* (dPal zLa-gsang Thig-le rTsa-ba'i rGyud).

into father and mother Tantras; furthermore, as Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has noted,ⁱ the basic principle of the archetypal *Mahayogatantra* of the Nyingmapa—the *Guhyagarbha* or *Essence of Secrets*,ⁱⁱ which summarizes the contents of all Tantras of *Mahayoga*—does not at all correspond to either that of the Father Anuttarayogatantras or that of the Mother Anuttarayogatantras. In fact, it only resembles that of the nondual Anuttarayogatantras: in the section on *Mahayoga* it will be easy to corroborate that most of the features of nondual Tantras outlined in the above quotation from Ju Mipham apply to the paradigmatic Mahayogatantras, in which “there is balance between the aspects of method and of *prajña* and between the kyerim and dzogrim stages,” and which “mainly consider that one’s state of *rigpa-bodhichitta*,³¹⁴ the single sphere (thigle) of total wisdom of purity and equality, is the ultimate nature of all phenomena.” However, such similarities are established by emphasizing what the two systems have in common, rather than what distinguishes them as a whole. In particular, in *Mahayoga* there exists the view that the true *mandala* is spontaneously perfect (lhundrub), consisting in the true nature in which cause and fruit are inseparable and wherein all beings have always been Awake, of which the *mandala* of sand used in the initiation is a mere symbolic image. Furthermore, in *Mahayoga* the Path is structured on a *model* of death, bardo and rebirth that somehow *reproduces* the structure and function of the supreme spontaneous deconditioning experiences that result from the unleashing of loops inherent in the human system, as corresponds to the highest sense of the term lhundrub in the context of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*—which is at the root of the striking superiority of *Mahayoga* over the *Anuttarayoga*. These are some of the main reasons why some Masters, including Tarthang Tulku,ⁱⁱⁱ have been so radical as to claim that the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa are midway between the outer Tantras and the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa.

The Inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa

1. *Mahayogatantra*^{iv}

In the first paragraph on the *Anuttarayogatantra*, some of the characteristics common to that class of Sarmapa Tantras and to the Mahayogatantras of the Nyingmapa were outlined. The contents of the second and third paragraphs on the *Anuttarayogatantra* also apply to the Mahayogatantras, so that they must be included also in a comprehension of *Mahayogatantra*. Then in the passage on the father, mother and nondual Anuttarayogatantras, some of the differences between the principles of *Mahayoga* and *Anuttarayoga* were outlined. Further differences between them are that in *Mahayoga*, but not in *Anuttarayoga*, two sections or series of teachings exist, which are the Series of the Sadhanas or drubde^v and the Series of the Tantras or gyüde^{vi}. The first, which has come to

ⁱ *Ibidem*.

ⁱⁱ Tib., *Sangwa Nyingpo Gyü* (gSang-ba sNying-po rGyud). This *Tantra* is also called *Net of the Magical Manifestation of Vajrasattva* (Tib., *rDo-rje Sems-dpa’ sGyu-’phrul draw-ba*).

ⁱⁱⁱ Tarthang Tulku, in *Crystal Mirror*, Vol. 5. Emeryville (Ca.), Dharma Press.

^{iv} Though in this section I expound the Mahayogatantras my own way, in it I have included a considerable amount of material from the section on the Mahayogatantras in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001), Part II, section 2.8.10.4, “The Four branches of Approach and Attainment,” pp. 208-213.

^v *sGrub sde*.

^{vi} *rGyud sde*.

us through two different lineages—that of the long linear transmission or *kama*ⁱ and that of the short transmission by means of treasure-teachings or *terma*³¹⁵—is limited to the Path of method, whereas the second is divided into a Path of method and a Path of liberation, just as is the case with the whole of the Anuttarayogatantras. Finally, as we will see below, in the Mahayogatantras (including those that are also counted among the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa, such as the *Guhyasamaja* and the *Shrichandraguhyatilakanamamahatantraraja* or *Dasang Thigle*ⁱⁱ), the Fruit is called Dzogchen, and there is an explanation of the *Vajra* nature in terms of properly Dzogchen concepts—such as *katak*, *lhundrub* and so on—that is not found in the Anuttarayogatantras.

With regard to the method of “creation,” after having applied gradually the three Contemplations, in these Tantras one mentally creates the *mandala* step by step and one is said to attain self-realization by means of this meditation. The three Contemplations are: (1) Concentration on the essential nature; (2) Contemplation of total vision; and (3) Contemplation of the cause.

(1) The concentration on the essential nature consists in abiding in a state of equanimous Contemplation free of thoughts, in a pure and limpid condition that is as all pervading as space.

(2) The contemplation of total vision corresponds to the arising of an impartial compassion, which is like a magical illusion, towards all beings failing to understand the essential nature (who nonetheless are realized to be equally illusory); then we stay clearly and undistractedly in this state of Contemplation.

(3) The contemplation of the cause, which depends on the two preceding ones, consists in visualizing a syllable (for example, the letter HUM) as the essence of the wisdom of the state of *rigpa*, like a fish jumping out of clear water. Here we meditate on the three divine manifestations (*sattwa*) that emanate from the syllable HUM, one within the other.³¹⁶

Thus it is said that in the *Mahayoga* the entrance door is the three Contemplations; that understanding the view means recognizing whatever appears as the male and female deities; that the basic samayas to keep concern the body, speech and mind; and that the Fruit is the state of method and *prajña* wisdom beyond union and separation (as method and *prajña* are not two different things that may unite or separate).

We have seen that, despite the fact that both in *Mahayoga* and *Anuttarayoga* the training in contemplation involves building the *mandala* in a gradual manner, some teachers consider *Mahayoga* as being utterly beyond *Anuttarayoga*, and place the latter somewhere between the outer Tantras and the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa. We have also seen that one of the reasons for this is that in *Mahayoga* there exists the view that the true *mandala* is spontaneously perfect (*lhundrub*) and consists in the true nature in which cause and fruit are inseparable and wherein all beings have always been Awake, of which the *mandala* of sand used in the initiation is a mere symbolic image. The fact that all beings have always been Awake is called Awakening in nature, wherein there are three stages: the paternal and maternal causes for the existence of a being, consisting of the sperm, the ovum and consciousness; the “physical” and “mental” elements that produce the body structure; and the body-mind system as support for the *mandala* of deities. Then

ⁱ *bKa’-ma*.

ⁱⁱ *Zla-gsang thig-le rgyud*.

there is Awakening in understanding, which refers to the levels of the vidhyadharas, when one really understands the original condition and therefore the fact that all beings have always been Awake. Finally, there is Awakening in realization, which is the actual realization of the Awakened condition beyond all interpretations in terms of concepts and therefore beyond the subject-object duality. (The last type of Awakening is, according to the *Mahayogatantrayana*, the manifestation of absolute truth *qua* Fruit. This vehicle, like the *Yogachara* and *Mahamadhyamaka* schools of the *Mahayana* and like the Chinese *T'ien-tai* school, posits three truths. However, this is not the place to compare the three truths of the *Mahayoga* with those of the three schools just mentioned.)

The *Mahayogatantra* involves thirteen levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) rather than eleven, which, as we have seen, is their number in the *Mahayana*. In this Tantric vehicle it is asserted that, though all phenomena and all beings are already Awake, in order to effectively realize this, one has to train one's mind for the three levels of Awakening proper to *Mahayoga*, which are the eleventh, the twelfth and the thirteenth. To train for the level of total light (the eleventh, which in the *Mahayana* is the last and that is said to correspond to *anuttara samyak sambodhi*), rather than undertaking the progressive Sutric training that allows one to proceed through the first four paths and the first ten levels, one directly practices the nonconceptual Contemplation of the essential nature. To become familiar with the level of the lotus (the twelfth) one meditates on the inseparability of *prajña* and compassion through the Contemplation of total vision. Finally, to become familiar with the level of the *chakra* of letters (the thirteenth) one meditates on the seed-syllable of the Contemplation of the cause in order to then gradually create the *mandala* and become familiar with it.

One could wonder how it is possible to arrive at the unveiling of the unconditioned and unmade by means of methods that involve the *creation* or a new reality that, being the result of *creation*, is necessarily *made*, and thus come to question the alleged superiority of *Mahayoga* even over the *Hinayana*, which, as we have seen, taught the “tearing-down one” (*apachayagami*) as a key meditation. The reply of a practitioner of *Mahayoga* would be that according to this vehicle the true condition of all forms is deity, the true condition of all sounds is *mantra*, and the true condition of mind is the *samadhi* of thatness, and that therefore the reality one creates is merely a way of acknowledging our original condition, so that one is not superimposing anything on it. Furthermore, a practitioner of this vehicle would note that by consciously constructing the visualization of the deity in the *mandala* one becomes familiar with the mechanisms whereby one had always built up ordinary reality, and thus gains some control of the process involved. More important, such a practitioner would note that by means of the completion stage one gains direct insight into the unconditioned and unmade, for the essence of the completion stage is precisely Seeing through the reality one has created into the unborn nature. Moreover, it is an incontrovertible fact that the practices of the completion stage can increase the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thig-le*)—which, as will be shown in the third part of this book, should allow the unconditioned and unmade to unveil more easily and then to be more clearly evident, and at the same time can make the process of neutralization or eradication of the karmic propensities at the root of *samsara* far more powerful and effective. This is directly related to the fact, mentioned in the preceding section and discussed in a note,³¹⁷ that in *Mahayoga* the Path is structured on a *model* of death, bardo and rebirth that in

some way *reproduces* the structure and function of the supreme, spontaneous deconditioning experiences that result from the unleashing of loops inherent in the human system, as corresponds to the highest sense of the term lhundrub (hence the use of the term and the striking superiority of *Mahayoga* over the *Anuttarayoga*). All this shows incontrovertibly that the power of this vehicle to unveil the unconditioned and uncompounded, as well as to neutralize samsaric conditionings, is much greater than that of all “lower” vehicles. (For a far more thorough explanation of *Mahayoga*, the reader is directed to Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. 1, pp. 276-283.)

Nevertheless, the *Kunche Gyälpo*, root *Tantra* of the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings, outlines the essential drawback of *Mahayogatantra* (which is also the essential drawback of the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the Sarmapas) as follows:ⁱ

Followers of *Mahayoga* aspire to [the realization] of *Vajradhara*:
 having entered the Path of method and *prajña*
 they practice the four [branches] of approach and attainment³¹⁸
 in the *mandala* of the purity of their own mind.
 The total bliss of *Atiyoga*
 is pure and total Awake awareness beyond effort.
 [The state that is evident] when there is no striving is hindered by *Mahayoga*.
 Applying effort to attain total completeness / plenitude and perfection
 amounts to falling into the misleading deviation of followers of *Mahayoga*.

2. *Anuyogatantra*ⁱⁱ

As we have seen, in the Ancient or Nyingmapa School, *Mahayoga* is not the sole inner Tantric vehicle belonging to the Path of transformation. In addition to it, there is the *Anuyogatantra*, which has no equivalent among the New or Sarmapa schools, and that is considered to be “superior,” *both* to the *Anuttarayogatantras* of the Sarmapa, *and* to the *Mahayogatantras* of the Nyingmapa. However, just like the *Anuttarayogatantra* and the *Mahayogatantra*, the *Anuyogatantra* contains two Paths, which are that of method and that of liberation.³¹⁹ In the Path of method of the *Anuyogatantra*, just like in that of the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the Sarmapa schools and in that of the *Mahayogatantra* of the Nyingmapas, there is a generation or creation stage and a completion or perfection stage. However, both in *Anuttarayoga* and in *Mahayoga*, the transformation corresponding to the generation or creation stage is said to be gradual, for the visualization is developed step by step. Furthermore, once the visualization has been generated (especially in the father *Anuttarayogatantras*, but in general in the whole of the *Anuttarayogatantras* and *Mahayogatantras*) it is important to maintain awareness of all of its details, which implies that in this level of *Tantra* an emphasis is placed on clarity. Finally, at the end of the practice it is indispensable to dissolve the visualization one has built up. Contrariwise, in the *Anuyogatantra*, which somehow is more directly based on the principle of lhundrub or

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 214. See also Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 179; Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, pp. 296-297; Tulku Thöndup, 1996, 1st ed. 1989, p. 96.

ⁱⁱ Though in this section I expound the *Anuyogatantras* my own way, in it I have included a considerable amount of material from the section on the *Anuyogatantras* in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 186-191 (also pp. 179-180).

spontaneous perfection, transformation is instantaneous and the *sensation of being the deity* has priority over the details of the visualization to a greater degree than in any of the three types of Anuttarayogatantras—which means that there is far more emphasis on *feeling* than on clarity. Furthermore, at the end of the practice the individual does not dissolve the visualization, but “remains indivisible from the deity.”

It is in daily life that the passions arise with greatest strength, and therefore it is in daily life that the Path of transformation, which as we have seen depends on the passions to the same degree that fire depends on fuel, and which has the power to turn the passions into wisdom, could prove extremely valuable. If, in order to transform the passions, we had to enter a meditative absorption characterized by emptiness, develop the visualization of ourselves as the deity step by step, then maintain consciousness of all details of the visualization, and finally dissolve this visualization and remain in a state of emptiness free from characteristics, it would be impossible for us to apply the Path of transformation when passions manifest in our daily experience. Contrariwise, if whenever passions arise in daily life we instantly visualize ourselves as a *heruka*³²⁰ deity and use the energy of the passion for sustaining the transformation, we will be able to effectively employ the passions in the Path of transformation as the raw material of realization. Therefore, only *Anuyogatantra* can allow us to apply the Path of transformation very effectively in daily life.

In this vehicle it is said that on the absolute plane one never separates from the unborn and uninterrupted manifestation of the male and female deities, or from the total, intrinsically empty expanse of the *dharmadhatu*—that is, from the space in which all “physical” and “mental” phenomena manifest, which cannot be understood in terms of conceptual extremes, and that can only be apprehended nonconceptually. On the relative plane, one clearly visualizes the dimension of form of the realized ones by meditating in an equanimous but distinct way. Practitioners of this system claim that in this way one attains realization.

Thus it is clear that in the *Anuyoga* one neither constructs the visualization of the deities step by step nor dissolves the visualization at the end of a session of practice. At the beginning of a session, one is supposed to instantly visualize the deities *in the instant, nondual Presence or rigpa* that is panoramic awareness indivisible from the total empty expanse of the *dharmadhatu*, with the certitude that the deities never ceased being there and thus that one is not creating anything. Then, upon ending the session, one does not formally dissolve the deities into emptiness, but is supposed to continue in the state of rigpa while maintaining nondual panoramic awareness (of) the *dharmadhatu*, with the certitude of the fact that the deities continue to be the embodiment of the true nature of all reality. In *The Precious Vase*, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu quotes from Rongzompa’s Commentary to Padmasambhava’s *Garland of Visions*, the *Rigpa Rangshar Tantra* of the Dzogchen Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga*, and Longchenpa’s *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle*:ⁱ

Rongzompa’s commentary states (Tibetan text 4: p. 243, 4):

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 187-191. The three works cited are: (1) Tibetan Text 4; (2) Tibetan Text 5; (3) Tibetan Text 12.

This [method] has been transmitted for those who have the capacity to remain clearly and wholly in the single instantaneous [nondual] Presence [called] rigpa³²¹ [that makes patent] the nature of *bodhichitta*, [and in that state carry out] all the aspects of meditation and practice [established in] the texts of *Yogatantra*. This means that one meditates on the nonconceptual state of the ultimate nature, on the illusory *mandala* of the deity,³²² on the *mandala* of higher contemplation or on the mandalas of nature, of contemplation, of the images and so on;³²³ [however, in *Anuyoga*] all these aspects that are explained separately are clearly perfected in the same instant, just as a person endowed with miraculous powers can perform simultaneously and without incompatibility the four habitual activities.³²⁴ To summarize [this point, it is said that] without separating from the two [aspects] there is the clarity of the one; indivisible as one, [this clarity] is clearly distinct in three [points]. Thus the perfection of the instantaneous presence of rigpa is called the ‘method of completion’.

“Without separating from the two [aspects]” refers to:

- Not separating from the sense that all animate and inanimate phenomena are the state of spontaneous perfection of Awakening in the spontaneously perfect *mandala* of the images, [which embodies] the [true] nature of the absolute [condition] beyond birth and cessation.
- Not separating from the state [in which] the [true] condition of the [primordial expanse containing all] phenomena (*dharmadhatu*), [which is] free from extremes³²⁵ [and therefore from all concepts, has unveiled]...

Without separating [from these two], one meditates clearly on the aggregates, constituents and sense bases in the *mandala* of higher contemplation: this is called the ‘single clarity’.

“[Abiding] indivisibly as one” means understanding that whatever appears [and whatever] one meditates on, is indivisible in the [empty] dimension of *bodhichitta* beyond birth and cessation, the ultimate nature [of phenomena].

“[The] three clearly distinct [points]” are: (1) even though one meditates on the *mandala* in which everything is spontaneously perfect, [the specific meditation] is clearly distinct from other contemplations; (2) even though the colors and attributes etc. [of the deity] manifest clearly in the *mandala* of higher contemplation, they are clearly distinct from those of other [deities]; (3) the manifestations of the central deity, consort and surrounding retinue must be clearly distinct. These are the three clearly distinct points.

If one is able to engage in this contemplation effortlessly on the basis of the principle of spontaneous perfection, integrating space and time in the [total] condition of absolute equality, then [this practice] is not different from the method of Dzogpa Chenpo. However here one does not really have this capacity, because effort is applied in directing the Presence of rigpa in a certain direction, and [because attempting to make] the instantaneous [timeless] state [be contained] within a period of time... entails fragmentariness. Thus one engages [in the practice] in this manner in order to perfect all aims in the single instantaneous Presence [that is called] rigpa.

The essence of *Anuyoga* is concisely expressed in the Self-arising State of Presence *Tantra* (Tibetan text 5: p. 520, 2):

The great lung³²⁶ [tradition] of the *Anuyoga* vehicle
speaks of the *vajra* of the state of inseparability
of the ultimate dimension and primordial gnosis.

Entry can be direct or gradual.

The understanding of the view is the state beyond union and separation.

In direct entry the deities, without needing to be visualized gradually,
are perfected by remembering the essence.

In gradual entry, one enters progressively into the ultimate dimension and into primordial gnosis
and finally attains the Fruit of the level of Vajradhara.³²⁷

Concerning the principle of the ultimate dimension (*dbyings*) and of primordial gnosis (*ye shes*), there is a clear and comprehensive explanation in *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* by Longchenpa (Tibetan text 12: p. 142, 4).³²⁸

We have seen that, at the beginning of a session, we instantly visualize the deities, and that theoretically this should be done in the state of instant, nondual Presence or *rigpa*, and therefore without losing sight of the *dharmadhatu* or empty expanse; furthermore, we should do so with the implicit awareness that the deities never ceased being there and thus that we are not creating anything. This implies that, according to the practitioners of this system, its practice begins from the manifest awareness of the unconditioned and unmade nature, and that the generation stage does not involve the creation of something, which by definition would *produce* a reality that would be conditioned and made; therefore, the visualization is not considered to veil the unconditioned and unmade. Hence they claim that realization of the unconditioned and unmade should not result from subsequent practices to be done after creation (for example, in the completion stage), but should be present from the very onset of the practice. Moreover, it is a fact that the methods of *Anuyoga* have the power to increase the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thig-le*) more swiftly than those of *Mahayoga*. Finally, upon ending the session there is no need to formally dissolve the deities into emptiness, for one is supposed to continue to maintain awareness of the unconditioned and unmade nature embodied in the deities, and thus to be perfectly aware that the deities continue to be this very nature.

However, we have also seen that here one does not really have the capacity to carry out the practice in the state of *rigpa*. The point is that, since effort is applied in order to direct the Presence that is *rigpa* in a certain direction, one is actually in a contrived state rather than in the pure spontaneity of *lhundrub*, and since this involves action, it gives rise to a conditioned and made vision that veils the unconditioned and unmade nature. In fact, since *rigpa* is by definition beyond directionality, by trying to direct it in a certain direction one introduces the subject-object duality, as well as the duality of mind (Skt., *chitta*; Tib., *sem*) and mental factors or mental events (Skt. *chaitasika*; Tib., *semjung*), both of which belong to the essential structure of delusion—the fragmentary perspective that conceals the unconditioned and undivided state of *rigpa*. Likewise, attempting to contain the timeless state of total completeness / plenitude and perfection that is the undisrupted Now within a period of time introduces an illusory division into it, giving rise to the fragmentariness that conceals the unconditioned and undivided state of *rigpa*; in fact, this causes us to wrongly identify the state of *rigpa* with something that can be recognized and that as such is partial and limited, when in truth that state is the all-liberating single gnosis in which all recognition and all that is partial and limited liberates itself spontaneously.³²⁹ If one really had the capacity to carry out the practice in the state of *rigpa*, one would be practicing the *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* rather than the *Anuyoga*.³³⁰

Furthermore, though it is claimed that *Anuyoga* is based on the properly Dzogchen principle of *lhundrub*, the truth is that it is based on an intentional, conscious reproduction of the principle of *lhundrub*. Firstly, in this vehicle *lhundrub* is reduced to the capacity for instantaneous (rather than gradual) visualization, which is an abyss away from the sense the term *lhundrub* has in the Dzogchen Menngagde (Skt., *Upadeshavarga*), in which it refers to spontaneous loops in the human system that result in the effortless, spontaneous

development, *reductio ad absurdum* and spontaneous liberation of delusion. Secondly, though it is true that both of the inner Nyingma Tantras of the Path of transformation involve in one way or another the symbolic reproduction of this typically Dzogchen process, a symbolic reproduction is an abyss away from the spontaneous dynamic it reproduces.

Everything that has been stated in the above two paragraphs is part of the reason why the *Kunche Gyälpo*, root *Tantra* of the Semde series of *Atiyoga*, states:ⁱ³³¹

Followers of *Anuyoga* aspire to the level of ‘Indivisible’ realization:
Having entered the Path of the empty expanse and primordial gnosis
they consider the primordially pure empty expanse where all phenomena manifest
to be the cause and the *mandala* of primordial gnosis to be the effect.
The total bliss of *Atiyoga*
is pure and total Awake awareness beyond cause and effect:
[The state] beyond cause and effect is hindered by *Anuyoga*:
conceiving total completeness / plenitude and perfection in terms of cause and effect
amounts to falling into the misleading deviation of followers of *Anuyoga*.

These, then, are the errors and obstacles concerning view and behavior.

In the *Anuyoga*, the “primordially pure empty expanse where all phenomena manifest” (Skt., *dharmadhatu*; Tib., *chöjing*ⁱⁱ) is Samantabhadri, the feminine aspect of primordial Buddhahood that is the *mandala* of primordially pure (katak) space. In turn, self-arisen, nondual Awake Awareness (Skt., *swasamvedana*; Tib., *rang-rig*), which may be said to correspond to the *dharmakaya* that is the Mind aspect of Buddhahood, is Samantabhadra, the masculine aspect of primordial Awakening, which makes up the *mandala* of spontaneous perfection (lhundrub)³³² and that gives rise to all phenomena, which are indivisible in it—even though mistakenly we perceive them as being inherently separate from each other. Finally, total pleasure is the “child” that, in symbolic terms, is said to be born as a result of the union of the two above aspects (which, however, are acknowledged not to be two separate elements from whose union pleasure may originate, but the inseparable katak and lhundrub aspects of the single, nondual primordial reality)—and which corresponds to the *mandala* of original *bodhichitta*.

This is the view of *Anuyoga* because in this vehicle the “primordially pure empty expanse where all phenomena manifest” is associated with the female sexual organ and, as such, from the standpoint of the male it is seen as the cause of the flow of bliss that may arise out of sexual union. Since according to this vehicle, self-arisen, nondual Awake Awareness manifests upon the realization of the inapprehensible character of this flow of bliss, *Anuyoga* views the empty expanse (Skt., *dharmadhatu*; Tib., *chöjing*) as cause and self-arisen awareness (Skt., *swasamvedana*; Tib., *rang-rig*) as effect (which corresponds to the explanation of the twelve links or *nidana* of interdependent origination, according to which *sparsha* or contact is the cause of *vedana* or sensation). And, indeed, the same

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2000, pp. 214-215. See also Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, pp. 179-180; Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, pp. 295-297; Tulku Thöndup, 1996, 1st ed. 1989, p. 96. I have modified the terminology in order to make it agree with the one used throughout this book.

ⁱⁱ *Chos-dbyings*.

thing occurs in the explanation of the four nyendrubⁱ or “four stages of approach and attainment” of *Mahayoga*.³³³

Contrariwise (as will be seen in Part Two of this book in the context of the discussion of Direct Introduction with the syllable PHAT, and as shown in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004), in the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* the *dharmadhatu* is not seen as cause and *rang-rig* is not seen as effect, for in the practice of this vehicle it is perfectly evident that the arising of *rang-rig* is not the effect of any cause—but, as implied by the particle rang, this arising is a spontaneous occurrence beyond the cause-effect relation.³³⁴

3. *Atiyogatantra*

The inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa also include the *Atiyogatantra*, which is the vehicle that is indicated by the well-known name “Dzogchen.” However, *Atiyogatantra* and Dzogchen are synonyms only partially, for the second term also refers to the Fruit of the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa: *Atiyogatantra* is a synonym of Dzogchen only when the latter term is used to refer to a vehicle, which as such must contain the three aspects that are the Base (in this case, Dzogchen *qua* Base), the Path (in this case, Dzogchen *qua* Path) and the Fruit (in this case, Dzogchen *qua* Fruit), for in Buddhism this is the necessary condition for there being an autonomous, independent vehicle.

Like the *Anuyoga*, this vehicle has no equivalent or near equivalent in the Sarmapa higher *Tantra*; the only element in Sarmapa teachings that partially corresponds to it is the present day Mahamudra tradition of the Kagyü School, which to some extent corresponds to the Khamⁱⁱ tradition of the Semdeⁱⁱⁱ series of Dzogchen teachings. Nonetheless, many Sarmapa Masters, yogis and monks received Dzogchen teachings from Nyingma Masters and adopted this vehicle as their principal practice, and a number of Revealers (tertöns) of *Ati* and other Nyingma teachings were born in the various Sarmapa schools.³³⁵ Since these Masters and Revealers transmitted the teachings of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo and other Nyingma teachings within their own schools, nowadays it is not uncommon for Sarmapa Masters to teach this vehicle, often in conjunction with the *Anuyogatantra* and/or the *Mahayogatantra*.

In this book I have been following the ancient texts that use the term *Tantrayana* to refer to the Path of transformation, and therefore I have been classifying the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, which is definitely not based on the principle of transformation, but on that of spontaneous liberation, as being beyond the *Tantrayana*. However, the root texts of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo are called Tantras. This is so because, as we have seen, the principal and most universal meaning of the word gyü, meaning *Tantra*, is “continuity”—and, as we will see in the next chapter, the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit that the word *Tantra* refers to is more perfect in this vehicle than in any other Tantric vehicle.

It is because this chapter has been devoted to the Path of transformation, that the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* will be considered in the following section, dedicated to the Path of spontaneous liberation. The *Kunche Gyälpo*, root *Tantra* of the Semde series of *Atiyoga*, states:^{iv}

ⁱ *bsNyen-sgrub bzhi*.

ⁱⁱ *Khams*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Sems-sde*.

^{iv} Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 148.

The “secret creation” [of *Mahayoga*] consists in secretly generating the three phases of absorption that it is believed one does not [already] possess.

In the “secret completion” [of *Anuyoga*], *prajña* is not the product or result of the three contemplations: all the phenomena of existence are the ultimate essence of *prajña* that arises from inner contemplation. As [given the fact that] since beginningless time one’s pure mind has been the deity, one deems that all the sense faculties of the *vajra* body are already the totality of one’s state, beyond the separation of view and behavior, of accepting and rejection. This is secret inner perfection.

In the “secret total completeness / plenitude and perfection” [of *Atiyoga*] the phenomena that appear through perception are not [to be] transformed into [primordially] pure and total awareness by means of the three contemplations. They are not [to be] perfected by reciting the seed syllable of the deity. I, the [primordial awareness / *bodhichitta* that is the] source, am total completeness / plenitude and perfection because there is nothing in me that is not complete and perfect. My three natures are the three aspects of the pure and total awareness [that as such is our] total completeness / plenitude and perfection. This is secret total completeness / plenitude and perfection...

Sections of the Inner Tantric Vehicles of the Nyingmapa

Each of the three inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa has three sections, all of which are based on the view of the corresponding inner *Tantra*, but each of which uses methods proper to one of the three inner Tantras. So *Mahayoga* has three sections that are based on the view of *Mahayoga*, but which use, respectively, methods belonging to *Mahayoga*, *Anuyoga*, and *Atiyoga*: *Maha-maha*, *Maha-anu* and *Maha-ati*; *Anuyoga* has three sections that are based on the view of *Anuyoga*, but which use, respectively, methods belonging to *Mahayoga*, *Anuyoga*, and *Atiyoga*: *Anu-maha*, *Anu-anu* and *Anu-ati*; and *Atiyoga* has three sections that are based on the view of *Atiyoga*, but which use, respectively, methods belonging to *Mahayoga*, *Anuyoga*, and *Atiyoga*: *Ati-maha*, *Ati-anu* and *Ati-ati*.

Physical Yoga

In connection with the completion stage of the *Anuttarayoga*, the *Mahayoga* and the *Anuyoga*, it is necessary to stress the role of physical yoga, which in the case of the Tantras in general is of the kind known as *Yantra Yoga* or “yoga of movement.” This type of yoga acts on the so-called channels (Skt., *nadi*; Tib., *tsa*ⁱ) and on the circulation of energy (Skt., *pranavayu*; Tib., *lung*ⁱⁱ) in order to harmonize the latter and to give rise to a greater integration of body and mind through the link between them, which is energy.

Furthermore, in the *Anuttarayogatantras* (and especially in the mother and nondual ones), in the *Mahayogatantras* and in the *Anuyogatantras*, *Yantra Yoga* must also act on the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thigle*ⁱⁱⁱ) in order to raise it, as well as on the seed-essence (Skt., *bindu*; Tib., *thigle*) in order to catalyze the experiences of total pleasure.³³⁶ In particular, in practices of pleasure and emptiness not involving a physical consort, the experiences sought depend on the

ⁱ *rTsa*.

ⁱⁱ *rLung*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Thig-le*.

combined application of physical *yoga* (including *pranayama* or yogic breathing), visualization and so on. In their turn, in practices of pleasure and emptiness involving a physical consort, specific muscular contractions and movements, together with *pranayama*, are often the key to conserving the seed-essence (Skt., *bindu*; Tib., *thig-le*), which in its turn is a necessary condition for the experiences of total pleasure to possibly arise and the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt. *kundalini*; Tib., *thig-le*) to possibly increase to the required levels. In Part Three of this book, an *Atiyoga* variety of *Yantra Yoga* (which in *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* is an important secondary practice) will be described succinctly, though no instructions for practice will be provided.

The Father, Mother and Nondual Anuttarayogatantras and the Three Series of Inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa

We saw that the Anuttarayogatantras of the New or Sarmapa schools are classified into father Tantras, mother Tantras and nondual Tantras, and that among these three, the principle of the nondual Tantras is closest to being the counterpart of the paradigmatic principle of the *Mahayogatantra* of the Nyingmapa.

However, Ju Mipham,ⁱ among others, asserted that the *Mahayoga* of the Old or Nyingmapa School was the same as the father Tantras of the New or Sarmapa schools, that the *Anuyoga* of the Nyingmapa corresponded to the mother Tantras of the Sarmapa, and that the *Atiyoga* of the Nyingmapa School corresponded to the nondual Tantras of the New or Sarmapa schools.

Such correspondences are quite inaccurate, even though in the case of Mi-pham they were not the result of a faulty understanding or misinformation, but of skillful means.³³⁷ It is no doubt true that in the father Anuttarayogatantras method preponderates over *prajñā*, and that they place a greater emphasis on clarity than on sensation, insofar as they require that the deity and *mandala* be visualized in great detail, and insofar as the ensuing realization emphasizes the inseparability of clarity and emptiness. Conversely, it is true that in the Mother Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa *prajñā* preponderates over method, and they place more emphasis on sensation than the Father Tantras, in two senses: firstly, in that there is no need to pay so much attention to the details of the visualization, for it is more important to have the *sensation of being the deity* in his or her *mandala*; secondly, in that they place a greater emphasis on the practices of the stage of completion aimed at the manifestation of total pleasure, and in the ensuing realization there is a greater emphasis on the inseparability of pleasure and emptiness. An analogous relation exists between the *Mahayogatantra* and the *Anuyogatantra* of the Nyingmapa, for *in comparison with the Anuyogatantras*, the Mahayogatantras place a greater emphasis on method than they do on *prajñā*, and they place a greater emphasis on clarity than they do on feeling; in fact, they require that both deity and *mandala* be visualized in much greater detail, and in the ensuing realization the inseparability of clarity and emptiness is paramount. Conversely, the Anuyogatantras place a far greater emphasis on *prajñā* than the Mahayogatantras, and they also place a far greater emphasis on feeling than the Mahayogatantras, in the same double sense in which the mother Anuttaratatantras emphasize feeling more than the father Anuttaratatantras: firstly, in that there is no need to pay so much attention to the details of the visualization, for it is most important to have

ⁱ Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyäl ('*Ju Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rNam-rgyal*), 1846-1912.

the *sensation of being the deity* in his or her *mandala*; secondly, in that they place a far greater emphasis on the practices of the stage of completion aimed at the manifestation of total pleasure and the realization of the inseparability of pleasure and emptiness.

However, the degree to which *prajña* prevails over method in the *Anuyoga* is far greater than in the mother Tantras of the Sarmapa, and the same applies to the degree to which the sensation of being the deity prevails over the details of the visualization, to the degree to which emphasis is placed on the practices of the stage of completion that should give rise to the experiences of total pleasure, and to the degree to which in the practice pleasure prevails over clarity. Likewise, in the *Anuyogatantra* the generation stage is far briefer, simpler and less emphasized than in the mother Tantras of the Sarmapa: as we have seen, in it the transformation is instantaneous rather than gradual, and almost the whole of the practice is devoted to the completion stage. Finally, and in connection with everything that has been said in this paragraph, the swiftness with which both the experiences of total pleasure and the realization of the inseparability of pleasure and emptiness may be attained in *Anuyoga* is much greater than in any of the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa.

Similarly, paradigmatic Mahayogatantras (such as the *Guhyagarbha*) place a far lesser emphasis on method, on the generation stage, on the details of the visualization, and on the inseparability of clarity and emptiness than father Anuttarayogatantras, for, as we have repeatedly seen, the principle of paradigmatic Mahayogatantras is much closer to the principle at the root of the nondual Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa, than to those of the other two classes of Anuttarayogatantras. In fact, when we compare paradigmatic Tantras of Mahayoga with the father and mother Anuttarayogatantras, we find that in the former there is no preponderance of either the method aspect or the *prajña* aspect, and that the Mahayogatantras contemplate the practice of method and *prajña* and the development and completion stages in the equanimity of the pure dimension, the total wisdom of the single sphere that is our own natural state of *rigpa-bodhichitta*, the primordial state that is the Base of all phenomena. Furthermore, while in father and mother Anuttaratanttras the wisdom state of the fourth initiation is barely mentioned, and in a veiled manner, in *Mahayoga* it is shown openly and clearly. Therefore, there can be no doubt that *Mahayoga* is utterly different from the father Anuttarayogatantras.

We have also seen that in *Mahayoga* there exists the view that the true *mandala* is spontaneously perfect (*lhundrub*), consisting in the true nature in which cause and fruit are inseparable and wherein all beings have always been Awake, of which the *mandala* of sand used in the initiation is a mere symbolic image. Since this principle is absent in all classes of Anuttarayogatantras, this is a further reason why it would not be legitimate to equate the Mahayogatantras with the father Anuttarayogatantras. Likewise, we have seen that in *Mahayoga* the Path is structured on a *model* of death, bardo and rebirth that reproduces the pattern of the spontaneous deconditioning experiences that result from the unleashing of loops inherent in the human system, as corresponds to the highest sense of the term *lhundrub*—which is not the case with any of the three classes of Anuttaratanttras. Therefore, how could the Mahayogatantras be said to correspond to the father Tantras of the Sarmapa?

Furthermore, a series of Masters including Kongtrül Ngagwang Yönten Gyatsoⁱ and Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu,ⁱ among others, have remarked that the principal difference

ⁱ Tibetan Text 11.

between *Mahayoga* and *Anuyoga* is not that the former puts a greater emphasis on method, on the stage of creation and on clarity, whereas the latter puts it on *prajña*, on the stage of completion and on sensation, but that in *Mahayoga* transformation is gradual, whereas in *Anuyoga* it is instantaneous and as such it is based on the principle of lhundrub. Since the principle of instantaneous transformation is not operative in *any* of the three classes of Anuttarayogatantras—father, mother, or nondual—and the principle of lhundrub has so little relevance in all of them, no matter how useful this may be in order to persuade members of Sarmapa traditions or to further good relations between the different schools, it would not at all be legitimate to establish a correspondence between the three inner Tantras of the Nyingmapas and the three types of Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa. And, in fact, the Nyingmapa School classifies as *Mahayogatantra* those of its own Tantras that correspond to Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa.

However, it is far more unreasonable to posit a correspondence between the nondual Anuttarayogatantras of the New or Sarmapa schools and the *Atiyogatantra* of the Ancient or Nyingmapa School. While the functional principle of all of the Anuttarayogatantras, independently of whether these are father Tantras, mother Tantras or nondual Tantras, is transformation, as we have seen, the *Atiyogatantra* of the Nyingmapa is not based on the principle of transformation but on that of spontaneous liberation, which is radically different from the principles behind all types of Tantric transformation practice, being clearly “superior” to all of these.

Differences Between the Nyingma and Sarma Translations In the Tantras that are Common to Anuttarayoga and Mahayoga

In the case of those Mahayogatantras of the Nyingmapa that also belong to the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the Sarmapa, such as the *Root Tantra of the Essence of the Secret Moon* and the *Guhyasamajatantra*, the Nyingmapa translations differ extensively from those of the Sarmapa; in fact, while the former favor the meaning over the letter, the latter are literal. This often causes the meaning of the two renderings to differ; when this happens, the meaning is more profound and correct in the Nyingma translations. For example, in Rinchen Zangpo’s Sarmapa translation of the *Mañjushrinamasanghiti*ⁱⁱ, the renowned verse “the supreme, totally pure *akshara*” was translated as “the supreme, totally pure letter,” for the line was translated attending to the literal meaning of the term *akshara*; in turn, in the *Drime Ö*ⁱⁱⁱ, a commentary to the *Kalachakratantra*, the same verse was rendered by the Nyingmapa as “the supreme, immutable and totally pure,” which seems to translate correctly the meaning the word *akshara* had in the original text.^{iv}

Moreover, Nyingma translations often *improve* on the original; for example, the Sanskrit term “yoga” means “union,” which doesn’t make sense in the higher Buddhist vehicles, as Buddhism does not posit an external deity or ultimate reality with which we should unite, and uses the term solely to refer to the practice allowing for the dissolution of one’s illusion of separateness and of one’s delusory valuation in general, and for the

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 178-180.

ⁱⁱ *mTshan brjod*: ‘*Phags pa ’Jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa*, in fourteen chapters, translated by Rinchen Zangpo (*Rin cen bZang po*).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Dri med ’od*.

^{iv} Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1993.

concomitant unveiling of the true condition of ourselves and the whole universe, and to refer to the state ensuing from this practice. This roughly corresponds to the etymology of the Tibetan term “naljor,” which is the Nyingma translation of the Sanskrit “yoga” (which, however, later on was adopted also by the Sarmapa): “nalmaⁱ” means “unaltered condition of something,” and “jorwaⁱⁱ” means “to contract,” “to take” or “to adhere to;” therefore, the combination of the two terms has the meaning of “acquiring (our own) unaltered condition and adhering to it,” or, to be more precise, “discovering our original unaltered condition and maintaining awareness (of) it.”³³⁸

The Fruit in the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa and in the Inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa

In the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the New or Sarmapa schools, the final Fruit of the practice is known as *Mahamudra* (Tib., Chaggya Chenpoⁱⁱⁱ). Although many Western translators have rendered this term as “great seal,” the Master Namkhai Norbu has pointed out that its correct translation is “total symbol.”^{iv} At the root of the mistake incurred by so many renowned translators is an incorrect reading of the Tibetan word “chaggya^v”: the “gya” in this word is written *rgya*, and thus it is different from the one that appears in triplicate in the phrase “*samaya gya gya gya*” printed at the end of many Nyingma terma teachings, which means “sealed” and is used to indicate that the teaching is very secret and should not be talked about. In their turn, in general the Sanskrit *maha* and the Tibetan chenpo mean “big” or “great,” which denotes a relative measure, for whatever is great can be even greater; however, these Sanskrit and Tibetan terms can also denote an absolute measure, in which case they are better translated as “total.” The practice of Tantrism begins and ends with symbols—the very manifestation of divinities being itself a symbol rather than the presence of a given being. *Mahamudra* is complete integration with that symbol and complete realization in it: there is nothing but the symbol, which is the total symbol referred to by the words *Mahamudra* and Chagchen.

In their turn, in the Anuyogatantras and Mahayogatantras of the Nyingmapa (and among the latter, also in the Nyingma version of Tantras that are also Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa, like the *Guhyasamaja* and the *Dasang Thigle*),³³⁹ the Fruit is known as Dzogchen (language of Oddiyana, *santi maha*; Skt., *mahasandhi*), which is a contraction of “Dzogpa Chenpo^{vi}.” “Dzogpa” means “full,” “complete” or “perfect;” for example, a glass *full* of water to the brim is “dzogpa,” but the same applies to an act that is *perfectly* carried out; thus we could say that in the term dzogpa the connotation of “full” refers to the katak aspect of Awakening, and in this sense translate the word either as “plenitude” or as “completeness”,³⁴⁰ and that in the same word the acceptance of “perfect” refers to the lhundrub aspect, and in that sense translate it as “perfect.” Since in an absolute sense “chenpo” means “total,” on the basis of the preceding interpretation I decided to translate the noun Dzogchen as “total completeness / plenitude and perfection.” *Mahamudra*, the

ⁱ *rNal-ma*.

ⁱⁱ *’Byor-ba*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Phyag-rgya chen-po*.

^{iv} Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished.

^v *Phyag-rgya*.

^{vi} *rDzogs-pa chen-po*.

final state of the Anuttarayogatantras, is not in any way different from the condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection indicated by the term Dzogchen that is the arrival point of both the *Mahayoga* and the *Anuyoga* of the Old or Nyingmapa School. However, the fact that the Fruit of the higher Tantra of the Sarmapas and of the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa consists in the same state does not mean that all these vehicles have the potential to achieve exactly the same degree of consolidation of that state. This is why the final level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) that may be achieved in *Anuttarayogatantra*, *Mahayogatantra* and *Anuyogatantra* is not at all the same.

As we have seen, even the final state of realization of the *Bodhisattvayana*, which corresponds to the eleventh level, is characterized by a certain partiality towards voidness (which implies a directionality that, as shown in the consideration of *Anuyoga*, entails fragmentation and therefore prevents the manifestation of limitless, Total Space-Time-Awareness beyond the duality center-periphery), rather than by the indivisibility of the *Vajra* nature with its two aspects, which are *katak* or primordial purity and *lhundrub* or spontaneous perfection. This is attested by the examples of the hen and of threading a needle that Namkhai Nyingpo used to illustrate the flaws of the highest realization attainable in the *Sutrayana*, and which were discussed at the end of the section on the Sudden *Mahayana* of the Chapter on the Path of renunciation.

The Path of transformation reaches beyond the eleventh level, which corresponds both to the final arrival point of the gradual *Mahayana* (or *Bodhisattvayana*) and to the Awakening attained instantly in the sudden *Mahayana*. For example, *Anuttarayogatantra* systems such as that of the *Kalachakratantra* and that of the *Vajrahridayalamkaratantra*ⁱ, assert that the practitioner may go beyond the final level of the Mahayana and attain a twelfth level, which in the *Kalachakra* is called *nampar drölwa sa*ⁱⁱ or totally liberated stage,³⁴¹ and which in the *Vajrahridayalamkara* is called *kuntu ö*ⁱⁱⁱ or total light³⁴² (other Anuttarayogatantras list different numbers of levels; however, some of these lists are intended to make the levels correspond to sets of *dharma* items such as the four aspects of each of the four pleasures, the sixteen emptinesses, the sacred places and so on).³⁴³

We have seen that the Fruit of the three inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa is the state of Dzogchen; however, as stated above, this does not mean that all of them achieve the same degree of consolidation of this state. In the *Mahayogatantra* the practitioner may go beyond the final level of the Mahayana and also beyond the twelfth level, which in this system is called “level of the lotus,” and attain as the Fruit a thirteenth level, designated as “level of the great accumulation of the *chakra* of letters.” Likewise, in *Anuyogatantra*, in which the levels are not the result of a gradual, progressive training, it is possible to go beyond the final level of *Mahayoga* and attain the fourteenth level, which is known as the “level of total pleasure:” the state of Dzogchen has been consolidated to a greater degree than in *Mahayoga*. As we will see in the following chapter, through the utterly nongradual Path of the *Atiyoga* it is possible to consolidate the state of Dzogchen even further, and attain up to the sixteenth level—and it is even possible to attain one of the modes of death characteristic of *Atiyoga*, which are unknown in other vehicles.³⁴⁴

ⁱ *rDo rje snying rgyan*.

ⁱⁱ *rNam par grol ba'i sa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Kun tu 'od*.

THE PATH OF SPONTANEOUS LIBERATION

The Path of spontaneous liberation is the only Path that consists of a single vehicle, which is the one that I sometimes abbreviate as “primordial vehicle” (*Atiyana*), and which corresponds to Dzogchen understood as a vehicle (as distinct from Dzogchen *qua* Fruit of *Mahayoga* and *Anuyoga*). As seen in the preceding chapters, traditional nouns for referring to this vehicle that comprise the term in the language of Oddiyana *Ati*ⁱ or primordial include: primordial *yoga* (*Atiyoga*), *Tantra* of primordial *yoga* (*Atiyogatantra*) and vehicle of the *Tantra* of primordial *yoga* (*Atiyogatantrayana*),ⁱⁱ which is the term I sometimes abbreviate as *Atiyana*). In turn, the term “Dzogchen” has many synonyms, including *bodhichitta* or *changchubsem*ⁱⁱⁱ, *thigle chenpo*^{iv} or total sphere, *thigle chik*^v or single sphere, *dagnyi chenpo*^{vi} or total I-ness, and so on.³⁴⁵

As we saw upon considering the Path of transformation, the term *Tantra* and its Tibetan equivalent have the double meaning of continuity and luminosity. Since all books and teachers that have employed the ancient classification of Buddhist vehicles into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation (including the book the reader has in his or her hands) have used the terms *Tantra* and *Tantrayana* as a synonym of “Path of transformation,” many people take them to refer exclusively to this Path. However, *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo, the functional principle of which is not transformation but spontaneous liberation, is also a Tantric Path, and its root texts are most appropriately called Tantras (Tib., *gyü*^{vii}). In fact, this vehicle is also based on the continuity of primordial luminosity, which it makes use of far more skillfully than the various vehicles of the Path of transformation.

The requisite for there being a Buddhist vehicle is that it must comprise three indispensable aspects, which are the Base, the Path and the Fruit. The continuity that is designated by the term *Tantra* also applies to these three aspects, each of which must have the same nature as the preceding one, for the Tantric vehicles that make up the Path of transformation are rooted in the conception that the Base is the *Vajra*-nature that contains the three kayas and the whole of the qualities and aspects of the Fruit, and that the Path is the unveiling and actualization of the *Vajra*-nature rather than the creation of a new

ⁱ Skt., *Adi*; Tib., *döma* (*gdod-ma*).

ⁱⁱ This term belongs to the language of Oddiyana; Skt., *Adiyogatantrayana*; Tib., *Shintu naljorgyi thekpa* (*shin-tu rnal-'byor-gyi theg-pa*).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Byang-chub sems*.

^{iv} *Thig-le chen-po*.

^v *Thig-le gcig*.

^{vi} *bDag nyid chen po*.

^{vii} *rGyud*.

reality (i.e., they pertain to the “Fruit-based vehicle” or *Phalayana*).³⁴⁶ However, this continuity of Base, Path and Fruit is most perfect in the *Atiyoga*:³⁴⁷ Dzogchen *qua* Base is the primordial condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection that corresponds to the all-liberating single gnosis that manifests its all-liberating nature when it unveils and so long as it remains unveiled in *nirvana*, but not when it is veiled in *samsara*; Dzogchen *qua* Path is the repeated self-unveiling of the condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection that is Dzogchen *qua* Base, corresponding to the all-liberating single gnosis, and the continuity of this unveiling, which results in the spontaneous liberation of all that arises; and Dzogchen *qua* Fruit is the definitive uncovering of the said condition, so that our lives become total completeness / plenitude and perfection. It is because in the *Atiyoga* the three aspects of Base, Path and Fruit are Dzogchen, that this vehicle *qua* vehicle is also called Dzogchen. (As we have seen, in *Anuyoga* and *Mahayoga* the Fruit is Dzogchen, but since the Base and the Path are not the inherently all-liberating single gnosis, these vehicles are not called Dzogchen. The fact that in spite of this the name Dzogchen is used in these vehicles also to refer to the Fruit can but bring to mind the *Samten Migdrön*’s categorization of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo as the universal ancestor of all vehicles.)

In the higher vehicles of the Path of transformation there is a generation stage in which a new reality must be created that was not originally manifest as part of the Base (even though, as we have seen, according to these vehicles the reality one creates is merely a way of acknowledging our original condition, in which the true condition of all forms is deity, the true condition of all sounds is *mantra*, and the true condition of mind is the *samadhi* of thatness, and therefore one would not be superimposing anything on the original condition, still the generation stage involves changing our vision or nangwaⁱ in order to produce a wholly new way of perceiving ourselves and our dimension). As stated in the preceding chapter, later on, in the completion stage, one is supposed to be enabled to See through that reality into the uncreated and unconditioned condition of the Base.³⁴⁸

This does not occur in *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo, in the Menngagdeⁱⁱ or *Upadeshavarga* series of which the concept of nangwa chogzhagⁱⁱⁱ indicates that one’s vision is to be left as it is rather than being transformed. In fact, in the primordial vehicle the Path, rather than involving the creation of a new, pure reality by means of visualization, consists in uncontrivedly Seeing through all conditioned experiences into their primordially pure (katak) and spontaneously perfect (lhundrub) true condition, which is the unconditioned, uncreated Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*. This proves that in *Ati* the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit is far more perfect than in the higher vehicles of the Path of transformation: rather than having to *create* a pure vision of reality, the practitioner of *Ati* has a direct unveiling of the Base that had always been there, and since the whole of the Base is primordially pure and spontaneously perfect, upon this unveiling all phenomena are realized to be primordially pure and spontaneously perfect. This is why Guru Chöwang^{iv} replied to the question “what is Dzogchen?” with the renowned sentence “not to visualize.”³⁴⁹ Furthermore, in *Atiyoga* there is no need to contrivedly *create* the qualities of Awakening, as is done in the causal vehicles of the *Sutrayana*, for the

ⁱ *sNang-ba*.

ⁱⁱ *Man-ngag-sde* or *man-ngag-gyi-sde*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sNang-ba cog-bzhag*.

^{iv} *Gu-ru chos-dbang* (1212-1270), whose full name was Guru Chökyi Wangchuk (*Chos-kyi dbang-phyug*).

spontaneous realization of the indivisibility of katak and lhundrub results in the self-manifestation of these qualities.

To conclude, even though the Path of transformation is based on the idea that the Base and the Path have the same nature as the Fruit, and that the Fruit is nothing but the stable, full realization of the Base, as noted in the preceding chapter, in it the Path is based on the principle of causality (which, according to the *Kunche Gyälpo*, is the defect of *Anuyoga*). The primordial vehicle of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* does not belong either to the *Hetuyana* or to the *Phalayana* precisely insofar as its Path is not based on causality, but on the principle of pure spontaneity that is referred to by the Tibetan term *lhundrub*ⁱ. In fact, another of the reasons why the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit is more perfect in this vehicle than in those pertaining to the Path of transformation, is that causes being necessarily different and separate from their effects, causality itself involves a breach of continuity. Furthermore, as we have seen repeatedly, causality affirms and sustains the doer of action, as well as the cause-effect relation; since all of these pertain to the realm of delusion, it is clear that causal practices sustain delusion.

The Base

In the indivisible undividedness of our original condition of *total plentitude and perfection* (Dzogchen), which in *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* is the Base, the Dzogchen teachings distinguish three aspects:

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(1) Essence or *ngowo*ⁱⁱ, which is voidness understood as the fact that the Base has no fixed form or color and therefore (through its nature or *ranzhin* and its energy or *thukje* aspect) it can contain and manifest any form or color, just as a mirror can reflect any form—or, to adapt the example to our times, just as a LCD screen can show any image—precisely insofar as its surface has no fixed form or color; this aspect is utterly timeless. (2) Nature or *rangzhin*ⁱⁱⁱ, which is clarity, and which is compared to the brightness and reflectiveness of a mirror, which is the condition for it to reflect forms and colors—or, adapting the example to our times, to the luminosity of a LCD screen, which is the condition for it to show forms and colors; this aspect is utterly timeless as well. (3) Energy or *thukje*^{iv},³⁵¹ which corresponds to the disposition for uninterruptedly manifesting phenomena and the process of manifestation itself, and includes both the phenomena in question (for, insofar as these phenomena, being manifestations of emptiness which do not block the manifestation of subsequent reflections and which depend on the mirror and on all other reflections,³⁵² they are utterly nonexistent, they do in no way alter this aspect of the Base by their occurrence or their disappearance) and the neutral moments of nonmanifestation, and which is compared to a mirror's uninterrupted manifestation of reflections—or, adapting the example to our times, to the uninterrupted manifestation of images in the LCD screen of a TV set that is always on;³⁵³ insofar as it gives rise to this succession, this aspect may be regarded as the basis for temporality (which is its *samsaric* manifestation). The example adapted to our times has the advantage of making the point

ⁱ *Lhun-grub*.

ⁱⁱ *ngo bo*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *rang bzhin*.

^{iv} *thugs rje*.

that there is nothing external to the Base, and hence that the latter is empty of substances other than itself (Skt. *parashunya*; Tib. *zhentong*ⁱ); both examples are equally good, however, for illustrating the fact that phenomena depend on the three aspects of the Base to manifest, and hence that they are all empty of self-being (Skt. *swabhava shunya*; Tib. *rantong*ⁱⁱ). (For a discussion of these types of emptiness, cf. Capriles, electronic publication 2004.) To conclude this brief discussion of the three aspects of the Base, it must be noted that, from the standpoint of temporality, the energy aspect of the Base is exemplified by the simile of a Buddhist *mala* or rosary that is often used to illustrate the meaning of the term *Tantra* and its Tibetan equivalent, Gyüⁱⁱⁱ: the string represents the uninterrupted flow of manifestation of the Base's empty essence and clear nature, and the beads and the spaces between them represent the unceasing experiences. Since inside each bead there is only string—the continuity of the manifestation of essence-emptiness—all experiences are in essence empty. However, although the essence of all our experiences is emptiness, the nature of the Base is to continuously give rise to these experiences. This shows that there is a perfect continuity also between the three aspects of the Base of *Atiyoga*.

The three functional possibilities of the Base are: (1) *nirvana*, in which the true condition of the Base is unveiled and its spontaneously perfect functionality is unhindered; (2) the base-of-all, in which neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* are active: and (3) *samsara*, in which the true condition of the Base is concealed and its spontaneously perfect functionality is impaired. When the last of these three possibilities manifests, the delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa* gives rise to the illusory sundering of the three aspects of the Base considered above. We have seen that two of the cornerstones of this delusion are, (1) the vibratory activity that seems to emanate from, or to be concentrated in, the center of the chest at the level of the heart, which “charges” thoughts with apparent value, truth and importance, and (2) the fragmentary, limited and rather hermetic focus of consciousness that, upon apprehending a segment of the continuum of the “energy” aspect of the Base, plunges the rest of this continuum in some sort of “penumbra of consciousness.” The delusory valuation-absolutization of the super-subtle thought structure known as the “directional threefold thought structure” gives rise to the delusory subject-object duality, while the delusory valuation-absolutization of subtle and coarse thoughts allows us to determine the segment of the totality appearing as object that is to be singled out—and, after it has been singled out, to know it as being inherently this or that entity. For its part, it is the fragmentary, limited and rather hermetic focus of conscious attention that makes it possible for us to single out that segment. Thus the former gives rise to the illusory subject-object duality, and the two of them together single out segments of the totality of sense data appearing as object, and give rise to the illusion that the singled out segments are inherently separate from the rest of the continuum of the energy aspect of the Base, and that they are self-existing entities. Therefore, while perceiving those segments the subject is unable to apprehend the Base's inherently void essence, and so there is an illusory sundering of the three aspects of the Base: the

ⁱ *gzhan stong*.

ⁱⁱ *rang stong*, which abbreviates the adjective *rang bzhing gyis stong pa*. The corresponding noun is *rang bzhing gyis stong pa nyid*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *rGyud*.

phenomena of energy seem *not* to be a manifestation of the single essence that is the Base's emptiness, arising by virtue of the uninterrupted flow of manifestation known as nature.

Further, according to the Dzogchen teachings, the continuum that the “energy” aspect of the Base is, manifests in three different ways, which are the dangⁱ, rölpaⁱⁱ and tselⁱⁱⁱ modes of manifestation of energy that will be considered in Part Two of this book. The third, the one referred to as tsel, is illustrated by the simile of a crystal prism through which white light passes, thereby being separated into a spectrum that is projected into an external dimension—for it gives rise to phenomena that clearly appear to lie in what the Dzogchen teachings call the “external dimension or jing”, the paradigmatic expression of which being those that we call “physical.”³⁵⁴ The first, the one called dang, is illustrated by the simile of a crystal ball that is pure, clear and limpid, in which there is nothing in particular and which is beyond the cleavage into an internal and an internal dimension; however, once tsel energy has manifested, all that may manifest in this form of energy seems to lie in an “internal dimension or jing^{iv},” just as happens with the reflections of external phenomena appearing in a crystal ball. Finally, the second, which is the one called rölpa, is illustrated by the simile of a mirror that manifests reflections that do not seem to be either internal or external, but to manifest nondually with the mirror's reflectiveness: this aspect of the continuum of the Base's energy, which links the other two, features phenomena that defy any dualistic attempt to place them in an internal or in an external dimension, the paradigmatic manifestations of which are immaterial visions such as those that arise in the bardo of the *dharmata* or chönyi bardo^v and which occur in the practices of Thögel^{vi} and the Yangthik^{vii} (the second and final stage of practice in the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen teachings).³⁵⁵ The point is that the illusory duality of subject and object, and of an internal dimension of jing and an external one, imply the illusory rupture of the continuum of energy; once these dualities manifest, the mental subject, which appears to lie in the internal dimension, and which is nothing but an element of the super-subtle thought-structure known as the “directional threefold thought structure,” seems to be at an unsurpassable distance from the “material” world, which seems to be located in the external dimension. Once this has occurred, only the practice with the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy can definitively put an end to the illusory rupture of the continuum of energy, totally uprooting delusion.

It must be noted that if, as some of the greatest Dzogchen teachers of the last centuries have claimed, the energy or thukje aspect of the Base were the disposition to manifest phenomena but excluded the phenomena manifested, the latter would *not* be utterly empty manifestations of the energy aspect of the Base: the appearances of the three modes of manifestation of energy (dang, rölpa and tsel) would be essents inherently different and separate from the Base and involving self-being—which would imply that the three modes of manifestation of energy could not

ⁱ gDangs.

ⁱⁱ Rol-pa.

ⁱⁱⁱ rTsal.

^{iv} dByings.

^v Chos-nyid bar-do.

^{vi} Thod-rgal.

^{vii} Yang-thig.

be said to be what they are said to be, and that dualism and self-being are the true condition of reality. In this case, the above discussed practice and the ensuing realizations would be impossible.

The Path

It is when we are confined to *samsara* that it is necessary to travel a Path that may allow us to reach the Fruit of *nirvana*.³⁵⁶ The three aspects of the Path in all Buddhist vehicles are *tawa*ⁱ, which normally means “theoretical view;” *gompa*ⁱⁱ, which normally signifies “contemplation,” “absorption” or “meditation;” and *chöpa*ⁱⁱⁱ, which normally designates a regulated behavior. In the *Atiyoga*, however, these three terms have senses that are very different from the ones they have in other Buddhist vehicles.

Since the Dzogchen teachings are born from direct awareness that the true nature of all reality is absolutely ineffable and unthinkable, in them the *tawa* is not a theoretical view; in the context of this vehicle I render the term as Vision, which I capitalize in order to make it clear that it does not refer to the vision of this or that object, but to the direct, nonconceptual, undistorted Vision (of) the Base, which is our own true condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection, corresponding to the all-liberating single gnosis. The first manifestation of the *tawa*, which marks the entrance to the Path, is the *Direct introduction* referred to in the first of the three phrases bequeathed by Garab Dorje (the primordial Master or *tönpa*^{iv} who introduced Buddhist Dzogchen into our world) as his spiritual testament: an initial, sudden unveiling of our original, uncompounded, unborn condition of *total completeness / plenitude and perfection*—i.e., of Dzogchen—in the state of *rigpa* (Awake Awareness, Presence or Truth³⁵⁷). We have seen that, when the essential delusion called *avidya* is actively producing *samsara*, the delusory valuation-absolutization of thoughts (including the directional threefold thought structure that, upon being delusorily valued, gives rise to the illusory subject-object duality that is the necessary condition for the manifestation of the passions) and other mental functions cause the nondual gnosis that is the Base and primordial condition of ourselves and of the entire universe to be hidden from the narrowly focused consciousness that becomes associated with a spurious mental subject. *Direct introduction* is nothing but the temporary spontaneous liberation or dissolution of delusion, which occurs upon the nondual, nonconceptual self-reGnition³⁵⁸ of the Awake, nonpositional, nonthetic, nonreflexive self-awareness that the Dzogchen teachings call *rigpa*, making patent this nondual awareness’ own face—whereby the true nature of the Base is uncovered in the manifestation of *rigpa-qua-Path*. As just noted, the name “spontaneous liberation” is due to the fact that this takes place spontaneously rather than being the result of an action, and therefore it does not *produce* a state that, being *produced*, would be conditioned; contrariwise, it (is) the dissolution of the conditioned experiences that in *samsara* veiled our unconditioned, uncompounded, unborn primordial nature. Thereafter one will have to

ⁱ *lTa-ba*.

ⁱⁱ *sGom-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sPyod-pa*.

^{iv} *sTon-pa*. As stated in a previous footnote, though the term “*tönpa*” literally means “Revealer,” it does not refer to those who reveal terms (*gter-ma*), but to those who reveal a complete system of Awakening at a time when previous systems have disappeared.

apply again and again the methods that will allow the spontaneous manifestation of the tawa or Vision, until the point at which subsequent manifestation of delusion no longer causes doubts to arise in us regarding the fact that the true nature of reality is the single, undivided, nonconceptual condition that became unveiled in the state of tawa or Vision—which is what is referred to by the second of the three phrases of the testament of primordial Master Garab Dorje: *Not to remain in doubt*.³⁵⁹

In the Dzogchen teachings the term gompa does not refer to any contemplation, absorption or meditation that may be contrivedly applied by the mind, for such activities are functions of delusion that do nothing but confirm and sustain delusion. In this context I render the term as Contemplation, which I capitalize in order to make it clear that it does not refer to the contemplation of an object by a subject, but to the continuity of the state of tawa beyond the subject-object duality, during limited periods called “sessions” (Tib., *thun*). Since the tawa is the patency of the all-liberating single gnosis, so long as we remain in the state of Contemplation that consists in the continuity of the tawa, all that arises and that otherwise would have concealed the Base liberates itself spontaneously, and therefore the propensities for the manifestation of delusion are progressively neutralized, while our capacity to remain in Contemplation progressively increases. The third of the phrases of the testament of Garab Dorje is *Continue in the State (of rigpa)*—which is only possible once one no longer remains in doubt, and which initially consists in Contemplation or gompaⁱ.

Finally, in the Dzogchen teachings chöpa does not refer to any of the possible types of predetermined behavior that may be contrivedly applied, for all such conducts are functions of delusion that do nothing but confirm and sustain delusion. In this context I render the term as Behavior, which I capitalize in order to make it clear that the term does not refer to regulating one’s behavior with reference to a set of rules (like in the Hinayana) or to some general principles (like in the Mahayana),³⁶⁰ but to the prolongation of gompa or Contemplation beyond *thun* sessions and throughout daily activities—which necessarily implies absolute spontaneity beyond adherence to rules or principles. Thus it is clear that the very principle of chöpa means that Dzogchen practitioners must go beyond the split of life into a Contemplation state and a post-Contemplation state; even though we may have sessions of Contemplation, from the very outset of the practice we must carry the state of rigpa or Awake Awareness beyond the sessions of Contemplation into the twenty-four hours of the day (i.e., throughout daily activities and during sleep).³⁶¹ Though we will initially lose the state of rigpa again and again during our daily activities, falling under the sway of delusion, we should also use our falls, errors and mistakes as part of the chöpa or Behavior, insofar as they will shake us, impairing our usual ego-sustaining mechanisms and in particular our adherence to the idea that we are consummate practitioners and the ensuing pride (as this would make delusion comfortable and would become an obstacle to the continuation of the practice).³⁶² The way this is achieved by the chöpa of Dzogchen will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, in the context of the meaning of Refuge in *Atiyoga*, and will be analyzed in greater detail in Part Two of this book.

In short, the Path consists in the unveiling of the Base in the manifestation of tawa or Vision, and in the continuity of this unveiling by means of gompa or Contemplation (i.e., of the continuity of tawa or Vision during sessions or thuns), and of chöpa or

ⁱ *sGom-pa*.

Behavior (i.e., of the continuity of Contemplation or gompa beyond sessions or thuns). Thus it is clear that there is a perfect continuity, not only between the Base, the Path and the Fruit of *Ati*, but also between the three aspects of the Path—a continuity that is absent even in the inner Tantric vehicles of the Path of transformation, for in them the conceptual character of the tawa, which is nothing but a theoretical view, contrasts with the nonconceptual character they attribute to the Fruit, and gompa (visualization, meditation, absorption or meditation) and chöpa do not consist in the pure and perfect continuity of tawa.

Since the term rangdrölⁱ that here is being translated as “spontaneous liberation” has often been translated as “self-liberation,” some people have understood it to mean that one liberates oneself as a result of one’s own action and of one’s own efforts rather than through the grace of an external power. This is totally wrong, for any action or effort on the part of the spurious mental subject would affirm and maintain its spurious existence as well as that of its objects. In order to properly understand the meaning of “spontaneous liberation,” we must keep in mind that in the Dzogchen teachings the state of rigpa, corresponding to the self-reGnition (of) Awake Awareness that makes *its own face patent*, is characterized as chikshe kundröl or “all-liberating single gnosis,” for the very moment this reGnition manifests, and so long as it is manifest, delusorily valued thoughts liberate themselves spontaneously (spontaneously dissolve) as their true condition, which is the true condition of ourselves and of the whole universe, becomes perfectly patent. The reason for this is that this self-reGnition *puts an end to avidya or marigpa in the three senses these terms have in the threefold classification adopted here*, of which in this context the first (that of the contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction that obscures rigpa’s inherent nondual self-awareness, preventing it from making patent its own face and hence from manifesting its all-liberating nature) and the second (which involves the spurious subject-object duality and the ensuing illusion of there being a distance between awareness and the phenomena it manifests) *are particularly relevant*. And when this nondual primordial gnosis or awareness is not veiled by either stupefaction or the delusion involving the subject-object duality, its functionality is like that of a mirror, in which there is no distance between the reflective capacity and the reflections it manifests, and in which there is no one to adhere to the reflections; therefore the very moment this single gnosis is self-reGnized, its all-liberating nature is actualized, so that whatever thought is present liberates itself instantly and spontaneously—and so long as this gnosis continues to (be) self-reGnized, whichever thoughts may arise liberate themselves spontaneously as they arise, leaving no traces or conditionings in that gnosis or awareness, just as reflections leave no traces in a looking glass. Conversely, when the basic delusion involving the subject-object duality manifests, the nonduality of primordial gnosis is veiled by the illusion that our cognitive capacity is at a distance from the appearances it manifests; therefore, there is an automatic clinging to the latter through acceptance or rejection, attachment or aversion—which prevents their spontaneous liberation and results in the production of karmic traces that will give rise to never-ending *samsara*.³⁶³ Therefore, though it is true that in this vehicle we are liberated by the power of our own potentiality rather than by the power of a meditation deity as is the case in the Path of transformation, liberation does not result from our own actions or our own efforts, but from the pure spontaneity that is the lhundrub aspect of the Base, utterly beyond the

ⁱ *Rang-grol*.

cause-effect relation. At any rate, there can be no doubt that the *Ati* principle of spontaneous liberation is radically different from the principle of transformation characteristic of the rest of the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa and the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa.

In Part Two of this book the three series of teachings of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo will be considered in some detail. At this point, it is sufficient to say that Mañjushrimitra, the main disciple of Primordial Master Garab Dorje, on the basis of the three phrases of the latter's testament, classified the doctrines and instructions he received from him into three series of teachings. The teachings that were mainly concerned with *Direct introduction* and that, despite being founded on the principle of spontaneous liberation, in many cases involved successive practices that resembled those of calm abiding or *shamatha*, and insight or *vipashyana* (and that *in this regard* may seem similar to the teachings of the *Sutrayana*), constituted the Semdeⁱ or (*Nature of*) *mind series* of Dzogchen teachings.³⁶⁴ Those that mainly dealt with the means for *Not remaining in doubt*, which were more sudden and that involved means for acting directly on the individual's energetic system, were grouped into the Longdeⁱⁱ or *Space series* of Dzogchen teachings.³⁶⁵ Finally, the teachings that were mainly concerned with the way to *Continue in the State (of rigpa)*, that were most abrupt, and that were most clearly different from those of vehicles and Paths other than *Atiyoga*, were gathered under the label Menngagde (Skt., *Upadeshavarga*) or *Oral instruction series*.³⁶⁶ (In Part Two of this book the Semde series of teachings will be explained in terms of the four naljorⁱⁱⁱ or yogas of the Kham tradition; the Longde series will be explained in terms of the four da^{iv} or symbols, and the Menngagde series will be explained in terms of the four chogzhag^v.)

Let us illustrate the practice of Dzogchen with the example of the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series, which has two stages of practice, the first of which is Tekchö^{vi} or “spontaneous, instant, absolute release of tension,” and the second of which is Thögel^{vii} or “acceleration”.³⁶⁷ Since the mental subject necessarily has to adopt some attitude toward the objects it experiences as different from itself, and this attitude is sustained by the delusory valuation and absolutization of thought, the illusory subject-object duality implies a greater or lesser degree of tension. In fact, it is when the delusory valuation of thought becomes more intense and the resultant tension becomes stronger, that it is said that we are being affected by a passion, for passions are nothing but emotionally charged attitudes that a mental subject has toward an object. If, upon looking at thoughts in one of the ways characteristic of Tekchö or “spontaneous rupture of tension,” the intrinsically all-liberating single gnosis unveils, and therefore the subject-object duality and all delusorily valued thoughts instantly dissolve *of themselves*, the individual's body-voice-mind will instantaneously, completely relax, in a way that has been compared with a stack of firewood falling on the ground of when the cord holding it together breaks.³⁶⁸ This is radically different from calm abiding, which is based on mollifying the attitude the mental

ⁱ *Sems-sde*.

ⁱⁱ *kLong-sde*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *rNal-'byor*.

^{iv} *Da*.

^v *Cog-bzhag*

^{vi} *Khregs-chod*.

^{vii} *Thod-rgal*.

subject has toward its objects, and therefore cannot result in the absolute relaxation that characterizes the manifestation of the state of rigpa or Truth in the practice of Tekchö.³⁶⁹

Thögel sets the conditions for the self-arising of thigles and other apparition-like phenomena that initially manifest in an apparently external dimension (i.e., they manifest as tsel energy in the external dimension or jingⁱ), and then activates the dynamic of rölpa energy and luminosity proper to the bardo of *dharmata* (Tib., chönyi bardoⁱⁱ), which does not allow the continuation of the illusion of there being an internal dimension and an outer one, a subject and an object. The conditions of the practice activate the basic tropisms of delusion that Tibetans call zhedangⁱⁱⁱ, causing us to react to the phenomena of luminosity with irritation and thus exacerbating our tensions, so that the appearance of there being a mental subject in an internal dimension that seems to be at a distance from objects that appear to lie in an external dimension turns into conflict as soon as it manifests. *Provided that we have sufficiently developed our capacity of spontaneous liberation through the practice of Tekchö*, the dynamic of rölpa energy will lead this dualistic delusion to immediately liberate itself spontaneously, so that tension and conflict are instantly released—which will catalyze the process of spontaneous, instant, absolute release of tension proper to Tekchö, intensifying it, accelerating it, and enhancing its power to neutralize delusion. This is so because each and every time delusory phenomena liberate themselves spontaneously, the propensity for them to manifest is neutralized to an extent that is directly proportional to the degree of emotional intensity and the height of energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., thigle)—and in the practice of Thögel both elements tend to reach their maximum potential.³⁷⁰ Since in this practice the illusory mental subject that appears to be at a distance from an object, liberates itself spontaneously the moment it arises, Thögel has the power to swiftly neutralize the propensity for the individual to experience him or herself as a mental subject in an internal dimension that is at a distance from objects that lie in an external dimension.

The practice of Thögel may be regarded as a lhundrub or spontaneous instance of zhitro^{iv} or “practice of the peaceful and the wrathful.” Since so far I have stressed only the “wrathful” aspect of this practice, it must be noted that in the spontaneous dynamic activated by the practice of Thögel, the “total pleasure” associated with the zhiwa^v or “peaceful” aspect is as important with regard to the ensuing learning as the dynamic of the trowo^{vi} or “wrathful” aspect. In particular, in the practice of darkness, the function of the experiences of total pleasure is not any less important than that of those involving the manifestation and subsequent spontaneous liberation of tensions.

At any rate, if the practice is carried on to its limit, finally the rölpa energy will blend with the tsel energy and we will never again experience ourselves as being at a distance from the continuum of the universe—and thus we will never depart again from total completeness / plenitude (Dzogchen). Furthermore, given the dimensionality-defying nature of the rölpa energy, if we come to the point at which this energy blends

ⁱ *dByings*.

ⁱⁱ *Chos-nyid bar-do*. This bardo normally manifests between death and rebirth, but in practices such as Thögel or the Yangthik it is made to manifest while the organism is alive and well.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Zhe-sdang*.

^{iv} *Zhi-khro*.

^v *Zhi-ba*.

^{vi} *Khro-bo*.

with the tsel energy, we will develop what could be called a “capacity for miracles.” To conclude, since there will be no longer a mental subject that may establish a link-of-being with the object indicated by our name, and therefore it will not be possible for us to be encumbered like the centipede of the poem cited in a previous chapter, in our activities we will manifest total perfection (Dzogchen).

The most essential and direct teachings of the Menngagde series of Dzogchen are those that constitute the Nyingthikⁱ. Though this noun often has been wrongly rendered as “heartdrop,” Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu remarks that the term nyingⁱⁱ does not refer to the physical heart, but to whatever is most essential, and that thik,ⁱⁱⁱ which is the phonetic rendering of the root syllable of the word thigle, in this context means potentiality (for wherever there is a thigle there is potentiality³⁷¹); therefore, the term could be translated as “essence of potentiality.” The most essential teachings of the Nyingthik are found in the Yangthik^{iv}; since the Tibetan term yang^v means “even more so,” if we rendered Nyingthik as “essence of potentiality,” we could well translate Yangthik as “innermost essence of potentiality.”^{vi372} Though it is said that in the Nyingthik the practices of Tekchö and Thögel are indivisible, the general teachings of this corpus emphasize Tekchö—the indivisibility of Tekchö and Thögel lying in the fact that the way the former is applied in the context of these teachings facilitates the spontaneous manifestation of Thögel experiences, which then will resolve themselves in the ways proper to this practice. The Yangthik is the section of the Nyingthik stressing the activation of luminosity and of rölpä energy in the bardo of the *dharmata* or chönyi bardo, and thus emphasizing the Thögel aspect of practice; therefore, all that has been said concerning Thögel applies to it.

The practices of Thögel and the Yangthik should not be undertaken until the necessary capacity of spontaneous liberation has been developed through the practices of Tekchö and/or the Nyingthik, for otherwise they will result in psychosis or other undesirable outcomes. However, under the right conditions, it will be most important to undertake these practices, for they will boost the process of spontaneous liberation set in motion through the practices of Tekchö or the Nyingthik, accelerating it, so that the realization attained so far may develop most rapidly to the level at which the illusory sundering of the Base by the appearance that there is a subject in an internal dimension and a world in an external dimension finally comes to an end. Furthermore, if a mass of light has not manifested in the external dimension or jing, the awareness associated with our organism (and thus this very organism) will not have the possibility of integrating with it—which means that we will not be able to obtain either of the two highest modes of ending life characteristic of the Dzogchen teachings.

The Fruit

ⁱ *sNying-thig*.

ⁱⁱ *sNying*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Thig*.

^{iv} *Yang-thig*.

^v *Yang*.

^{vi} Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished

We have seen that in the *Atiyoga* the Fruit is nothing but the definitive stabilization of the complete unveiling of the indivisibility of the three aspects of the Base, so that it will never again be concealed. However, this Fruit is not achieved all at once, but by stages: first the *dharmakaya* manifests as the true condition of the ngowo or essence aspect of the Base is realized; then, without losing sight of the true condition of the ngowo aspect, the *sambhogakaya* manifests as the true condition of the rangzhin or nature aspect is realized; and finally, without losing sight of the true condition of the indivisibility of the ngowo or essence and rangzhin or nature aspects, the *nirmanakaya* manifests as the true condition of the thukje or energy aspect is realized. Once the indivisibility of the three aspects of the Base has completely unveiled and this unveiling has become stable, it could be said that the *swabhavikaya* has manifested and the Fruit has been achieved—though in fact it is difficult to establish a precise point at which this may be said to have occurred, for in this vehicle the Path is a process of ongoing Awakening that may be said to reach an end only once the fourth vision of Thögel has unfolded to its ultimate degree. When the Buddha-activities of those who reach this point have been completed, rather than going through the process of death they attain the Total Transference or Phowa Chenpo that will be briefly referred to below.³⁷³

Since each of the above stages corresponds to the realization of the true condition of one of the aspects of the Base, which is achieved by treading the Path, and since the last of these stages consists in the realization of the indivisibility of the three aspects of the Base, again there can be no doubt that in this vehicle there is a perfect continuity of Base, Path and Fruit.³⁷⁴

As we have seen, in *Atiyoga* the first level of realization consists in the unveiling of the true condition of the essence or ngowo aspect of the Base (which corresponds to the Base's voidness and that is the *dharmakaya-qua-Base*); in the Menngagde series, this may initially occur upon the application of some of the methods associated with Direct introduction, when ngowo shiⁱ shines forth;³⁷⁵ henceforth, it takes place again and again throughout the practice of Tekchö or the Nyingthik, in which the practitioner deals with the phenomena of the dang mode of manifestation of energy, as the essence or true condition of these phenomena is reGnized. The reGnition (of) the true condition of the ngowo aspect of the Base and of the “inner” phenomena of the dang mode of manifestation of energy corresponds to the manifestation of the *dharmakaya*, which in this series progressively consolidates through the practices of Tekchö and/or of the Nyingthik.³⁷⁶

Through the practice of Tekchö or the Nyingthik we develop the capacity of spontaneous liberation. As explained in the section on the Path of *Ati*, once this capacity has developed to a given degree, we must devote ourselves to the practice of Thögel or the Yangthik, in which we have access to the bardo of the *dharmata*, so that immaterial luminous phenomena may manifest in the external jing or dimension as visions of the tsel mode of manifestation of energy, and then the spontaneous or lhundrub dynamic inherent to the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy catalyzes the repeated spontaneous liberation of the duality of subject and object, and of an internal and an external dimension: the luminous visions, which at this point have been reGnized as the *sambhogakaya*, continue to be there, but our dualistic perception of them (which involves the illusion of there being a mental subject and the illusion of there being an object) liberates itself

ⁱ *Ngo bo'i gshis*.

spontaneously each and every time it arises, and hence as the practice unfolds our propensities for delusion are progressively burned out and the *sambhogakaya* gradually consolidates.

Finally, when the above practice reaches the point at which the *rölpa* and *tsel* modes of manifestation of energy blend, so that the so-called physical world is no longer experienced as existing in an external dimension or *jing*, and the *tsel* energy acquires for us those characteristics of the *rölpa* energy that correspond to the wisdoms of quantity and quality³⁷⁷ (so that we are endowed with what ordinary people would regard as a “capacity for miracles”), the *nirmanakaya* (and not only this *kaya*, but the indivisibility of the *trikaya*) may be said to have consolidated to a considerable degree.³⁷⁸ Furthermore, if the awareness associated with our organism (and thus this very organism) totally integrates in the “mass of light” that, in the practice of Thögel or the Yangthik, originally manifested as *tsel* energy in the external dimension or *jing* (but which then became *rölpa* energy, and as such catalyzed our own integration with it), according to how far the fourth vision of Thögel of the Yangthik has unfolded, we will obtain one of the two highest modes of death characteristic of the Dzogchen teachings.³⁷⁹

Thus in *Atiyoga* the sequence of realization begins with the *dharmakaya*, goes on with the *sambhogakaya*, and concludes with the *nirmanakaya* and the indivisibility of the three kayas; therefore, it is *the inverse* of the one established in the Tantras of the Path of transformation, which is *nirmanakaya-sambhogakaya-dharmakaya-swabhavikaya*. This apparent contradiction is due to the fact that the meaning of the terms *nirmanakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, *dharmakaya* and *swabhavikaya* is not the same in *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* as in lower vehicles. In fact, what is glimpsed in the Direct Introduction of Dzogchen is exactly that which manifests as the *final stage* of realization of the Tantric Path, which the latter calls *swabhavikaya*, but which in *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* is the *dharmakaya qua* realization of the true condition of the *ngowo* aspect of the Base and of the *dang* energy. In their turn, the subsequent levels of realization, which the Menngagde series of Dzogchen teachings calls *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*, go far beyond anything that may be attained through the practice of other vehicles or Paths. The point is that, just as on the Path of transformation it is possible to go beyond the point of arrival of the Path of renunciation, on the Path of spontaneous liberation one can go far beyond the final point of arrival of the Path of transformation. Therefore, there can be no doubt that, in the case of those having the appropriate capacity, the Path of spontaneous liberation can lead to a more complete realization in a shorter time.

In the *Mahayana*, the two Buddha-bodies (the *dharmakaya* and the *rupakaya*, which as we have seen consists of the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*) are generally held to be the result of the accumulations of merits and wisdom, respectively.³⁸⁰ In the *Mahayogatantra* this vision is maintained to a certain degree, for it is said that in the final level, *bhumi* or *sa*, which in this vehicle is that of the “*chakra* of letters” (or, more precisely, of the “immutable *mandala*,” cf. the discussion of the term *akshara*), in spite of the voidness or insubstantiality of letters (or, more precisely, of the immutable condition), the *mandala* of symbolic attributes manifests *as a result of the accumulation of merits*. In the *Atiyoga* such causal relationships are not established insofar as this is the Path beyond cause and effect in which realization is the result of the pure spontaneity of the *lhundrub* aspect of the Base applied *qua* Path; therefore, in *Ati* the Fruit is absolutely unconditioned, unproduced, unmade, uncompounded, unborn.³⁸¹ In fact, the causally

obtained *rupakaya* of *Mahayoga*, which manifests as such in the level of the immutable *mandala* (or of the “*chakra* of letters”), is not at all the same as the lhundrub *rupakaya* of *Atiyoga*, which does not manifest in the thirteenth level, but as the result of a further development of realization that cannot be attained through *Mahayogatantra*.³⁸²

Concerning the levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*), in the *Atiyoga* one single level (*sa chikpa*ⁱ) is spoken of, as the practitioner is compared to a *garuda* bird that upon hatching is already fully developed:³⁸³ the state that manifests in the direct Introduction that marks the outset of the Path of *Atiyoga* is not different from the Awakening that is the final Fruit of this Path. However, as suggested in the above paragraphs, in *Atiyoga* that state may unfold far beyond the arrival point of *Mahayoga* and *Anuyoga*, until the illusory cleavage into a subject in an internal dimension and a world in an external dimension is definitively and irreversibly surpassed. This is why, in terms of a perspective different from that which establishes a single level, the *Rigpa Rangshar Tantra*ⁱⁱ (one of the root texts of the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde series of *Ati*) states that in this vehicle it is possible to reach three levels beyond the final goal of *Mahayogatantra* and two levels beyond that of *Anuyogatantra*: it is possible to reach a fifteenth level, designated as “*Vajradhara* level,” and a sixteenth level, known as the “level of supreme primordial gnosis” (however, even when the Path is explained in terms of this multi-level optics, the individual is said not to go through the levels in the gradual way typical of the *Mahayana*, but in such a way that it is not possible to pinpoint the precise level the individual is going through at any given moment).ⁱⁱⁱ³⁸⁴ In the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen, the unsurpassable Fruit that the *Rigpa Rangshar* identifies as the sixteenth level is the final attainment of the practice of Thögel (a practice that, as we have seen, is carried out in the bardo of the *dharmata* or chönyi bardo^{iv}: though most people believe this bardo is only experienced in the second of the three stages of the process between death and rebirth, in Thögel and the Yangthik one goes through it while the organism is clinically alive).

When, in the Longde and Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen, the final attainment is carried to its very limit or very near it, the yogi may attain one of the four modes of death that are characteristic of Dzogchen. These are:

(1) The rainbow body or *jalü*^v, which results from the “mode of death of the dakinis (*khandros*^{vi}),” proper to those who have attained the highest realization resulting from the practice of the Vajra-bridge or Dorje Zampa^{vii} pertaining to the Longde series of Dzogchen. This realization should not be confused with the so-called “rainbow body” resulting from specific Tantric practices of the Path of Transformation, which is not at all equivalent.

(2) The body of atoms (*lü dü*l thren du deng^{viii}), which results from the “mode of death of the vidyadharas (*rigdzins*^{ix}),” proper to those who have attained the highest realization resulting from the practice of Tekchö or the Nyingthik (which, as we have

ⁱ *Sa gcig pa*.

ⁱⁱ *Rig-pa rang-shar chen-po'i rgyud*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Tibetan Text 5, as well as Tibetan Text 11.

^{iv} *Chos-nyid bar-do*.

^v *'Ja'-lus*.

^{vi} *mKha'-'gro*.

^{vii} *rDo-rje zam-pa*.

^{viii} *Lus rdul phran du dengs*.

^{ix} *Rig-'dzin*.

seen, belong to the Menngagde series of Dzogchen). This realization is compared to the breaking of a closed vase, upon which the internal space or dimension and the external space or dimension fuse.

(3) The body of light (ökyikuⁱ or öphungⁱⁱ), which results from the mode of death called “self-consuming like a fire,” proper to those who have developed to a certain extent the fourth vision of Thögel and/or the Yangthik, and thus attain the second highest level of realization that can result from these practices. This type of body is often called “rainbow body” as well.

(4) The total transference or phowa chenpo (powa chenpoⁱⁱⁱ), which does *not* involve going through the process of death and which results from the mode of ending life called “invisible like space,” proper to those who have attained the highest level of realization resulting from the practices of Thögel and/or the Yangthik.

ⁱ 'Od-kyi sku.

ⁱⁱ 'Od-phung.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Pho-ba chen-po.

ORIGIN, VALIDITY AND LINEAGES OF TRANSMISSION OF THE THREE PATHS

We have seen that, according to the classification of the nine vehicles of the Nyingmapa into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation received through the *Kathang Dennga* and the *Samten Migdrön*, the first of these Paths, which responds mainly to the body or physical aspect of individuals the true nature of which is the *nirmanakaya*, manifested in the human world *through* the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni. The second Path (including the outer Tantras that constitute the Path of purification and those of the inner Tantras that make up the Path of transformation strictly speaking), which responds chiefly to the voice or energetic aspect of individuals the nature of which is the *sambhogakaya*, arrived in the human world *through* *sambhogakaya* manifestations. The third Path, which responds mainly to the mind aspect of individuals the true nature of which is the *dharmakaya*, came to the human world directly *through* the *dharmakaya* (as we have seen, since its methods work at the level of mind, there was no need for the first human links to have visions that henceforth would become methods of the practice).

It is clear that the most ancient form of teachings that from the very onset bore the label “Buddhist” consists of the three vehicles of the *Sutrayana* that make up the Path of renunciation. All vehicles except for the *Hinayana* agree that these three vehicles in their integrity were taught directly by the Buddha Shakyamuni through the “material” level of his existence, corresponding to the dimension of the *nirmanakaya*, by means of the three successive Promulgations that gave rise to the texts that form the canonical basis of the Path of renunciation³⁸⁵ (the most ancient written texts pertaining to this Path being those of the First Promulgation).³⁸⁶

Agreement is far less general with regard to the other six vehicles and two Paths (which are not listed as Buddhist vehicles and Paths in the texts of the *Sutrayana*). The teachings of the Nyingmapa assert that the three inner Tantras (*Ati*, *Anu* and *Maha*) that make up the highest category in this system were “transmitted” in a nondual manner (i.e., without there being a transmission properly speaking) from the *dharmakaya* to the *sambhogakaya*, and then passed from the *sambhogakaya* to the *nirmanakaya*. Though this is a universal explanation arising from an incontrovertible fact, it may be convenient to distinguish the transmission of *Ati*, in which the supreme Master Garab Dorje did not need to have the vision of a *sambhogakaya* deity, but simply remained in the state of *dharmakaya* beyond the duality of one who transmits and another one who receives the transmission,³⁸⁷ from the transmission of *Anu* and *Maha*, in which the true nature of the elements and their functions manifested in the dimension of the energy of the great adepts or mahasiddhas who were to become the first human links of each of the Tantras,

as the corresponding *sambhogakaya* deity in the pure dimension of his or her *mandala* (in which the various types of energy, the five elements, the five aggregates and all of the functions of the *mahasiddha*'s existence were personified as deities): in this case, these great adepts may be said *somehow* to have received transmission *through the manifestation of the deity*. With regard to the latter, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu notes:ⁱ

The Tantric teachings [that constitute the Path of transformation] appeared in our human dimension *through the visionary experiences* of realized individuals such as mahasiddhas, who had the capacity to contact other dimensions and transmit to the human realm the teachings received in those dimensions. The Tantric initiation arose because, once a *mahasiddha* received the transmission of a practice based on the principle of transformation, he or she used paintings or drawings showing the respective divinities and the respective mandalas, as well as oral explanations, in order to communicate it to others and enable them, through the use of imagination, to transform themselves in the prescribed way. It is said that the teachings of Tantrism have a more symbolic character than those of the Sūtrayāna because when the Mahasiddhas transmitted to their human disciples the methods of transformation they had received, with their respective mandalas and the figures of the corresponding divinities, these became symbols: the garland of heads of a manifestation began to signify this, its diadem of skulls began to signify that, and so on.

As we have seen, the teachings do not distinguish between the arising of the Tantras of the Path of transformation through *sambhogakaya* visions, and the arising of *Atiyoga* independently of visions, but simply assert that the three inner Tantras had their source in the *dharmakaya*,³⁸⁸ that the three outer Tantras arose through the symbolic transmission of the *sambhogakaya*, and that the *Sūtrayāna* arose through the oral explanations of the *nirmanakaya* and in particular of the Buddha Shakyamuni.³⁸⁹ The *Gongpa Dūpa Gyü*ⁱⁱⁱ, fundamental root *Tantra* of the *Anuyoga*, reads:ⁱⁱⁱ

The dimension of *dharmakaya* is like space, its name is “total pervasiveness,” and the teacher is Samantabhadra, who transmits the teaching through the nonconceptual dimension and through the three inner Tantras [which are *Maha*, *Anu* and *Ati*].

In the Akanishta (Tib., Ogmin^{iv}) palace of [the Buddha] Vairocana, like a King, the *sambhogakaya* teaches the bodhisattvas the three series of outer Tantras—*Kriya*, *Ubhaya* and *Yoga*—by means of the symbols of the manifestation it has embodied.

South of Jambudvīpa [our world], the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni took on the form of a *śravaka* and taught various disciples the three sections (*pitaka*) of *Sūtra*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidharma*, transmitting the teaching through the three analytical (i.e., *Sūtrayāna*) vehicles.

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished.

ⁱⁱ *dGongs-pa 'Dus-pa rGyud*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 22 (see also note 16, p.264). Adriano Clemente took the quotation from the Colophon of Tibetan Text 14, attributed to Longchen Rabjampa (*kLong-chen rab-'byams-pa*). Reproduced with slight modifications in order to adapt the terminology to the one used in this book.

^{iv} *'Og-min*. The term means “the highest” and designates the pure dimension in which various teachings arose (so that different types of Akanishta are spoken of according to the different manifestations of wisdom).

In turn, the *Kunche Gyälpo*ⁱ, fundamental root Tantra of the Semde series of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*, reads:ⁱⁱ

From the self-arisen awareness of the One who creates all—that is, Myself—there arise the three natures (i.e., essence or ngowo, nature or rangzhin, and energy or thukje), which manifest as the Masters of the three dimensions: [respectively,] the *dharmakaya*, the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*. Concerning the nature of these three dimensions... the *dharmakaya* is the natural beginningless condition that transcends subject and object; the *sambhogakaya* is perfect enjoyment [of] the desirable riches [that are my own qualifications]; the *nirmanakaya* is taking on any [possible physical] form in order to teach. The teaching of the Masters of the three dimensions manifests in three aspects, [which are the] secret, [the] inner and [the] outer.

The teaching of the *dharmakaya* Master is revealed in the nature of the “three secrets,” which are called “secret” because they are not accessible to everyone: from the pure nature of the Base there arise the three aspects of [the] secret generation [stage that is the essence of *Mahayoga*], [the] secret completion [stage that is the essence of *Anuyoga*], and [the] secret total completeness and perfection [that is essence of *Atiyoga*].

The secret teaching [of *Mahayoga*], in which the three stages [consisting in the contemplation of the essential nature, the contemplation of total vision, and the contemplation of the cause] are generated from nothingness, is called “secret generation.” In the teaching [of *Anuyoga*] called “secret completion,” [by] developing inner *prajña* one does not conceptualize the three contemplations, and all phenomena that manifest in perception during inner contemplation are said to be the essence of *prajña*: having visualized one’s pure mind as the original deity, without dualism between view and behavior, beyond acceptance and rejection, the *vajra* sensory bases of the body are defined as “the nature of total I-ness:” this is called “secret completion.”

Concerning the teaching of secret total completeness and perfection [corresponding to the vehicle of *Atiyoga*], all existent phenomena are *not* transformed into [the primordial state of] *bodhichitta* by means of the three contemplations, nor are they perfected by reciting the essential syllable [of the deity]: I, who creates all, am total completeness and perfection because there is nothing in me that is not complete and perfect. My nature manifests in three aspects [which are] the three bodhichittas of total completeness and perfection (i.e., are essence, nature and energy): this is called “total secret completeness [and perfection].”

This is the teaching of the *dharmakaya* Master.

Then this *Tantra* goes on to list and explain the teachings of the *sambhogakaya* Master, which are the three outer Tantras, and the teachings of the *nirmanakaya* Master, which are the three vehicles of the Sutrayana. The *Tantra* reads:ⁱⁱⁱ

The teaching of the *sambhogakaya* Master comprises the three outer series of action [consisting in *Kriya*, *Ubhaya* and *Yoga*].

According to the general view of the Nyingmapa School, the *Vajrayana* Path of purification, which roughly could be said to consist in the three levels of *Tantra* that this school calls “outer” and that the Sarmapa schools call “lower,”³⁹⁰ was taught in the

ⁱ *Kun-byed rgyal-po*.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 23, 48-22b, 5.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibidem*.

Akanishta palace of the Buddha Vairochana by the *sambhogakaya* in its dimension of color and light, which is neither material nor concrete.³⁹¹ In a book in Italian published in 1988, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu asserted that such general explanations are not definitive, and quoted the *Bairo Drabag*ⁱ, which despite being a Nyingma text, coincides with the Sarmapas in asserting that the three outer Tantras were taught by the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni.ⁱⁱ³⁹²

To the disciples endowed with particular capacities [the Buddha Shakyamuni] transmitted some teachings of *Tantra*. Thus [he] taught the *Kriyatantra* in the Nairāñjana river and in Singhala Park; the *Ubhayatantra* at Subahu (Tib., Pungzangⁱⁱⁱ) Park; [and] the *Yogatantra* in the palace of the Flaming Fire Mountain (Tib., Meri Barwa^{iv})."

As noted above, the teachings of the Sarmapas also assert that the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni taught not only the three vehicles of the *Sutrayana*, but also the three lower Tantras, which are *Kriya*, *Charya* (corresponding to *Ubhaya*) and *Yoga*. Furthermore, according to these schools Shakyamuni also taught the Anuttaratantras that according to their system make up the highest category of Tantras. In the book in Italian quoted above, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu wrote:^v

[According to the teachings of the Sarmapa...] ...in the glorious stupa of *Dhanakuta* (Tib., Drepung^{vi}) in Southern India, Shakyamuni Buddha... manifested in the divine aspect of Shri Kalachakra and... transmitted the *Tantra* bearing the same name.

Likewise, some Sarmapa accounts of the origin of the *Guhyasamajatantra* claim that when King Indrabhuti the Great, ruler of Oddiyana, invoked Shakyamuni, the sage magically manifested before him, and finally granted him the transmission in the form of Shri Guhyasamaja.³⁹³ However, in general the accounts according to which Shakyamuni transmitted the Anuttarayogatantras agree in asserting that he did so *from an immaterial dimension of color and light*, corresponding to the *sambhogakaya*, in the form of the *yab-yum* manifestation (i.e., the manifestation in union with a consort)^{vii} of a Tantric meditation deity (Skt., *devata*; Tib., *yi-dam*), rather than in his habitual *nirmanakaya* form as a celibate monk. As the Master Namkhai Norbu has pointed out, the fact that a monk may have manifested in this way may seem to be a contradiction, but it is not, for the deity and his consort were not something material or concrete, but a manifestation, in the dimension of natural energy,³⁹⁴ of the true nature of the elements and their functions, arising in response to the karmic potentialities of the one receiving the transmission.³⁹⁵ Thus, it is clear that the Anuttaratantras of the Sarmapa were also introduced into the human world through *sambhogakaya* manifestations.

ⁱ *Bai ro'i 'dra 'bag*.

ⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, Part III, Chapter IX, p. 84. The quote is from Tibetan Text 15, p. 6 b, 4.

ⁱⁱⁱ *lPung bzang*. This is how this park is called in Tibetan Text 15, p. 6 b, 4; this name may mean "good shoulder," "good army," etc. The term translates the Indian name Subahu, as in the case of the *Tantra of the Dialogue with Subahu* (*Subahuparipricchanamatantra: dPung-bzang-gi rgyud*).

^{iv} *Me ri 'bar ba*.

^v *Ibidem*.

^{vi} *'Bras spungs*.

^{vii} Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished.

Among the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa, the Mahayogatantras are said to have fallen on the palace of Indrabhuti the younger, King of Oddiyana,ⁱ³⁹⁶ and during the initial period to have been transmitted mainly by adepts from this country, which probably corresponded to the valley of Kabul in present day Afghanistan and/or the valley of Swat in present day Pakistan. According to one of the best-known accounts, the lineage of these Tantras passed from the *dharmakaya* Samantabhadra to the *sambhogakaya* Vajrasattva, and then to the *nirmanakaya* bodhisattvas of the three families (which are Mañjushri, Avalokiteshwara and Vajrapani); from them it passed to Lichchavi Vimalakirti (Tib., Drime Drakpaⁱⁱ), the hero of the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*,ⁱⁱⁱ along with the four other excellent beings. From these, it passed through King Ja (Indrabhuti of Oddiyana, who according to Dudjom Rinpoche in this case was Indrabhuti the Middle: the second of the three Indrabhutis), the later Kukuraja, Indrabhuti the younger, and then through six more links (including princess Gomadevi) until it reached Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra, who introduced the lineage into Tibet.^{iv} Though it is said that the Mahayogatantras fell on Indrabhuti's palace, according to this account later on the King decided to receive the transmission for all these Tantras from the Lichchavi Vimalakirti.

With regard to the Anuyogatantras of the Nyingmapa School, Dudjom Rinpoche cites a prophesy according to which they would originate in Shri Lanka;^{v397} however, he tells us that they were first received by Kambalapada (Indrabhuti the younger), King of Oddiyana, who spontaneously understood their meaning, but then, in order to legitimate his understanding, received teachings from the Lichchavi Vimalakirti.^{vi} Another account tells us that the lineage of these Tantras passed from the *dharmakaya* Samantabhadra to the *sambhogakaya* Buddhas of the five families, to the *nirmanakaya* bodhisattvas of the three families, to Lichchavi Vimalakirti, to King Ja (Indrabhuti the younger of Oddiyana), to the later Kukuraja, and then through nine more links to Nubchen Sangye Yeshe.^{vii} At any rate, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu^{viii} has pointed out that Nubchen Sangye Yeshe, who had received teachings from Dharmabodhi,³⁹⁸ Vashudhara,³⁹⁹ and, in particular, from Drushai Chetsenkye^{ix} in the land of Drusha^x, was the one who introduced them into Tibet from the latter country, which bordered on Oddiyana, and which, according to this Master and other scholars, corresponds to the present (ex-Soviet) republic of Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁰⁰

To sum up, though the transmission of both *Mahayoga* and *Anuyoga* arose in the dimension of the *dharmakaya*, the mahasiddhas who initiated the transmission of these Tantras in the human world received the respective methods through manifestations of the true nature of the elements and their functions that were neither material nor

ⁱ Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I., p. 460.

ⁱⁱ *Dri-med grags-pa*. In full: *Li-tsa-bi dri-ma med-par grags-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Luk, Charles (Upashaka Lü Kuan Yu), translator, 1972.

^{iv} Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I., p. 458 *et seq.* Tulku Thöndup, 1984, pp. 19-21.

^v Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I., p. 460.

^{vi} Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I., p. 485 *et seq.*

^{vii} This is the account given in Tulku Thöndup, 1984, pp. 22-23.

^{viii} Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished.

^{ix} *Bru-sha'i Che-btsan sKyes*: Chetsenkye of the land of Drusha. For references to this Master see Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I., pp. 489, 537, 607 and 609.

^x *Bru-sha*.

concrete and that appeared in the dimension of their own energy in visible *sambhogakaya* form.⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, though in their turn the Sarmapa traditions tell us that it was the Buddha Shakyamuni who originally communicated the Anuttarayogatantras to our world, as we have seen, the first human practitioners also received them through a *sambhogakaya* manifestation. And in fact, a Path that deals mainly with the level of energy somehow should arise precisely through this level.

Lastly, the *Atiyogatantrayana*, which according to Tibetan Buddhism (and in particular to the tradition of the Old or Nyingmapa School) is the supreme vehicle of Buddhism, was transmitted by the *dharmakaya* Samantabhadra or, which is the same thing, by Awake Awareness, to the *sambhogakaya* Vajrasattva, who transmitted it to the *nirmanakaya* Prahevajra (i.e., Garab Dorje), who was born 55 CE.⁴⁰² As we have seen repeatedly, the *Atiyoga* is the teaching of the Mind level the true condition of which is the *dharmakaya*, and thus its transmission does not need to involve the manifestation of any particular type of vision (even though, as we have seen and as we will see in greater detail in Part Two of this book, the self-generated, spontaneous visions of Thögel may work as the most powerful catalyst of the spontaneous liberation that characterizes this vehicle).

Validity of the Tantras as Buddhist Teachings

Does the fact that the Nyingma Tantras were not taught by the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni, or the fact that the Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapas were not taught by *the physical dimension* of Shakyamuni, mean that they are not Buddhist teachings? What determines whether a teaching is Buddhist or not Buddhist is not whether or not it was first transmitted in our human world by Shakyamuni, but whether or not it conforms to a series of established criteria. Jamgön Kongtrül's *Encyclopedia of Knowledge (Shecha Kunchab)*ⁱii tells us:ⁱⁱⁱ

[Whether or not] a person who adheres to a philosophical system [is a Buddhist] can be determined [on the basis of the following points]: [concerning the view or tawa], by whether or not they admit as their view the 'four signs' of the Buddha's word; [concerning the meditation or gompā], by whether or not the meditation [they practice] should become an antidote to [the highest level of mundane meditative absorption, corresponding to the fourth formless realm or *arupa loka*, which is that of neither-being-nor-nonbeing, and that is normally referred to as] the 'peak of existence;' concerning behavior or chöpa, by whether or not they relinquish the two extremes [consisting of] the self-mortification [of the ascetic] and the insatiable craving [of the hedonist]. Concerning the Fruit [consisting in] liberation, by whether or not they recognize [the third Noble Truth, which is] the Truth of cessation, as the special state wherein there is no more negativity to overcome. *The Luminous Discipline (Dülwa Ölden)*^{iv} reads:

ⁱ *Shes-bya Kun-khyab*.

ⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 11. See Bibliography for data on English translations.

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 23-24. The quotation is from Tibetan Text 11, A: vol. 2, p. 359, 13.

^{iv} 'Dul-ba 'Od-ldan.

“It perfectly teaches the three trainings [consisting of *shila* or moral discipline, *samadhi* or meditative absorption, and *prajña* or discriminative wisdom]; it perfectly possesses the four signs [that will be enumerated below]; it brings about virtue at the beginning [of the Path], the middle [of the Path] and the end [of the Path]: in this way the wise recognize the word of the Buddha.”

[According to Buddhism] the ‘four signs’ are the four epitomes of dharmas; as one can read in *Infinite Secrets* (*Sangwa Samkyi Mikhyabpa*ⁱ):

“The Tathagata has epitomized all Dharmas in four aphorisms:

“Everything compounded is impermanent;
Everything contaminated by delusion⁴⁰³ is suffering;
All phenomena are devoid of independent being or existence;
Nirvana (the condition beyond suffering) is peace.”

In fact, it is well known that, according to some of the most important and revered of the sutras, it was the great bodhisattvas or the great arhats, rather than Shakyamuni, who pronounced the words recorded in them; however, since they gave the teachings through the power of the Buddha, these are considered to be the word of the Buddha. Something similar happens in the case of the mahasiddhas of Oddiyana who revealed the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa: if they received and transmitted them through the power of the *trikaya* of the Buddha (consisting of the *dharmakaya*, the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*) manifesting through one of the three kayas, and, furthermore, the Tantras they received fulfill all the criteria enumerated in the *Shecha Kunchab* and quoted above, these texts are authentic Buddhist teachings.

Concerning the teachings of the Path of spontaneous liberation of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo, which, as we have seen, were introduced into the human world by tönpa Garab Dorjeⁱⁱ, it must be emphasized that, even though no one has ever attributed these teachings directly to Shakyamuni, no serious Tibetan Master would dare to assert that they do not constitute a Buddhist Path—or even that they do not constitute the supreme Path of Buddhism. On the one hand, for a teaching that does not belong to the concrete, material level—as is the case with Dzogchen *Ati*—to be Buddhist, it is not necessary that it should have been taught by Shakyamuni’s concrete material level or *nirmanakaya*. On the other hand, just as there is one type of teaching of the Buddha that arises when he empowers the bodhisattvas to voice them, and another type that arises when the Buddha empowers the arhats (both of which are contained in Buddhist sutras and considered to be direct teachings of the Buddha), there is still another type of Buddhist teachings that is transmitted through prophecy: Shakyamuni announces that at such and such a moment, in such and such a place, such and such individual will reveal such and such type of Buddhist teaching, and consequently, when the prophesied teaching arises, it is considered as a direct teaching of the Buddha. Since Shakyamuni prophesized that a certain time after his *parinirvana* or physical death, there would appear in Oddiyana a teaching beyond cause and effect which would be the most essential of all Buddhist teachings, it is universally recognized that the Buddhist

ⁱ *gSang-ba bSam-kyis Mi-khyab-pa.*

ⁱⁱ *sTon-pa dGa'-rab rDo-rje.*

Dzogchen teaching taught in Oddiyana by the tönpa Garab Dorjeⁱ⁴⁰⁴ is a direct teaching of the Buddha. And, in contrast to the teachings that bodhisattvas and arhats give in the sutras, insofar as Garab Dorje is deemed to be an emanation of the Buddha, the teachings of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo that manifested through him are not considered to have been given through “empowerment,” but to have been taught directly by the Buddha.

Furthermore, since Tönpa or Primordial Master Garab Dorje was an emanation of Shakyamuni Buddha, the latter could not have been unaware of the principle of *Ati* Dzogpa chenpo. And although his Awakening was not the result of applying Dzogchen methods, it occurred as Awake awareness manifested from the condition of the base-of-all, in a way that was somehow analogous to those Atiyana ways of directly introducing rigpa in which the latter is reGnized upon the arising of spontaneous awareness from the condition of the base-of-all.⁴⁰⁵ Hence it is not difficult to understand that many Sutras of the Mahayana, pertaining both to the second and the third Promulgations, include teachings that seem to be based on the principle of *Ati* (or that somehow show its traces).

Regarding Mahayana Buddhism, both abrupt and gradual, it is also worthwhile to bear in mind that, as stated in a note to a previous chapter, according to the traditions of the Ancient or Nyingmapa School of Buddhism codified in the *Chöjung Khepai Gatön*ⁱⁱ by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwaⁱⁱⁱ, one of the two lines of transmission originating in Garab Dorje passed through Nagarjuna and Aryadeva—the latter of whom, according to the same source, attained the rainbow body^{iv}.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore, according to the text in question, the founder of the Madhyamaka School and his direct successor were links in the transmission of Dzogchen Atiyoga (which may be taken to somehow imply that the Madhyamaka is the result of adapting the point of view deriving from Dzogchen to the principles of the Mahayana).

Antecedents of Dzogchen in Pre-Buddhist Traditions

The fact that no serious Tibetan Master would dare to assert that Dzogchen is not a Buddhist Path, or even that it is not the supreme Path of Buddhism, does not mean that the principle of Atiyoga and the Dzogchen teachings are strictly confined to Buddhism. No doubt, if the Dzogchen Atiyoga is the primordial vehicle, which rather than being a philosophical system is the direct, nonconceptual Vision (of) the primordial state, and which *qua* primordial vehicle is (as stated in the *Samten Migdrön*) the universal ancestor of all vehicles, by no means could it be circumscribed to a single religious system, a single country or a single culture. In fact, more than 1.800 years⁴⁰⁷ before the arising of Buddhist Dzogchen, the Tönpa or Primordial Revealer of Bön, Shenrab Miwoche^v (Lhabön Yongsu Tagpa^{vi}), taught a series of Dzogchen teachings in the area of Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar in West Tibet (seat of the city of *Khyung-lung*, at that

ⁱ *sTon-pa dGa'-rab rDo-rje*.

ⁱⁱ *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, which may be translated as *A Feast for the Erudite*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba*.

^{iv} Namkhai Norbu, Italian 1988.

^v *gShen rab Mi bo che*.

^{vi} *Lha bon Yongs su dag pa*.

time capital of the Kingdom of Zhang-zhung). And though these teachings look quite rudimentary when compared with the present Dzogchen teachings of Buddhism, they are beyond all doubts based on the principle of spontaneous liberation and as such are a form of Dzogchen Atiyoga.

Upon considering the origins of Bön and of the teachings of Tönpa Shenrab, and on the basis of thorough historical research, the Italian scholar Giuseppe Tucci rightly noted that there was an intimate connection between Bönpo Dzogchen and Shivaism,⁴⁰⁸ on the one hand, and between these two traditions and those of the Zurvanists and the Ismailians, on the other hand. However, under the influence of the biased views of some influential mainstream Tibetan Buddhist scholars, the renowned scholar of the IsMEO came to interpret the presence of Shaivas in the region of Mount Kailash and the close connections and terminological coincidences between Shivaism and Bönpo Dzogchen as proving that Bönpo Dzogchen derived from Shivaism.⁴⁰⁹ Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has replied to this wrong view in the following words:ⁱⁱ

The most concentrated essence of the Nyingthikⁱⁱⁱ is the body of teachings grouped under the term Yangthik^{iv}. In Tibetan, “yang” means “even more.” For example, if something is profound, it is qualified as “zabmo^v,” and if it is even more profound, it is qualified as “yangzab^{vi}.” “Essential” is “nyingpo^{vii},” and “even more essential” is “yangnying^{viii}.” It is important to point this out because Professor Tucci has written that the fact that the Dzogchen teachings use words including the terms “Ati,” “Chiti^{ix,410}” and “Yangthik,” each of which is considered more essential than the former, proves that the Dzogchen teaching derived from Kashmiri Shaivism, which features terms similar to these ones. This is a paramount inversion. “Ati” is the term in the language of Oddiyana that corresponds to the Sanskrit *adi*, meaning “primordial”. In turn, “Chiti,” a term used to refer to the more general teachings of Atiyoga, is a combination of “chi,” which in Tibetan means “more general,” and “ti,” which are the last two letters of *ati*. Finally, “Yangthik” is a totally Tibetan term that indicates the more specific teachings of Atiyoga. Some Tibetan Buddhist scholars have asserted that certain concepts of the Bön tradition were received from Shaivism, and it is possible that Professor Tucci may have derived his views from these interpretations by Tibetan Buddhists.

If it were true that all these terms appear in Kashmiri Shaivism, that would not at all be surprising, for the chief sacred place of Shaivism is Mount Kailash in West Tibet, located in what at the time of the arising of Bönpo Dzogchen was the Kingdom of Zhang-zhung, where the Bön tradition prevailed, and where it was conserved and transmitted until its posterior diffusion through Eastern Tibet and Bhutan. Everyone automatically assumes that the culture, religion and philosophy of India and China are very old and autochthonous. However, the very opposite occurs with the culture, religion and philosophy of Tibet: people tend to assume that they must have in their integrity come from other countries, such as India, China, or even Persia. This way of thinking is

ⁱ Tucci, Giuseppe, 1970, English 1980, Chapter Seven (pp. 213-248), and in particular pp. 213-224.

ⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 2004.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sNying-thig*.

^{iv} *Yang-thig*.

^v *Zab-mo*.

^{vi} *Yang-zab*.

^{vii} *sNying-po*.

^{viii} *Yang-snying*.

^{ix} *sPyi-ti*.

typical of those who are totally conditioned by the traditions established by pro-Indian Buddhists in Tibet. If many concepts of Dzogchen and Bön came from Shaivism, where did Shaivism come from? Since it is supposed to be of Indian origin, Shaivism could not have come from elsewhere but India, whereas Bön and Dzogchen, being Tibetan, must be something absorbed or imported from other regions and traditions.

What a naïve way of thinking! The Shaivas conserve the whole history of their teachings, and according to it, their doctrine originated in Mount Kailash. This is the reason why every year hundreds of Shaivas go on pilgrimage from India to Mount Kailash and circumambulate it. Now, where is Mount Kailash? In India or in Tibet? And if Kailash is in Tibet and it was there that Shaivism originated, why should it be said that Bön and Dzogchen took their concepts from India? It is logical to hypothesize that Shaivism may have had its roots in Bön, which prevailed in the region of Mount Kailash ever since Tönpa Shenrab Miwocheⁱ established it there some 3.800 years ago, and which contains its own Dzogchen teachings, part of which may have leaked into Shaivism.

The area of Mount Kailash seems to have been a hub for Taoism as well. After giving the *Tao-Te-King* to a Chinese boarder officer, Lao-tzu left China in the direction of Zhang-zhung. According to William Rockhill,ⁱⁱ Bönpos in Eastern Tibet were usually identified by the Chinese as Taoists, and Shenrab Miwocheⁱⁱⁱ was generally thought to stand for Lao Tzu. In his turn, Tsung-lien Shen wrote:^{iv}

“Bön-Po, one form of Shamanism, is considered by some scholars to be a Tibetan copy of a later decadent phase of Chinese Taoism... However, by borrowing too freely from the abundance of Buddhism, it was not long before Bön-Po lost its own characteristics and became absorbed into its rival.”

Alexandra David-Neel also pointed out the alleged genetic relationship between Taoism and Bön (I have failed to remember the work in which she did so)—and I myself have heard oral reports about Taoist Masters who have asserted the identity of their own tradition and Bön. At any rate, as will be seen below, the ancient sources consulted by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu^v suggest that, just as in the case of Tucci’s explanation of the relationships between Bön and Shivaism, the course of the influences between these two systems may have been inverted by Chinese scholars, for the Chinese view the rest of humankind—and in particular their Tibetan neighbors—as uncultured barbarians (like Tucci, they seem to have been unaware of the fact that the Paths of Awakening antedate civilization, and that civilization is both a product and a catalyst of degeneration).

The most significant evidence suggesting a connection between Dzogchen and Taoism, however, is the fact that both the “holy immortal” or *Shen-hsien*’s “ascension to Heaven” in what Herrlee Creel called Hsien Taoism,^{vi} and the final sign of ultimate realization of “Complete Reality” in Chuan Chen Taoism,^{vii} are illustrated by the image

ⁱ *sTon-pa gShen-rab Mi-bo-che*.

ⁱⁱ Rockhill, William, 1997, pp. 217-218, n. 2.

ⁱⁱⁱ *gShen rab Mi bo che*.

^{iv} Shen, Tsung-lien, 1953, this Ed., 1973, p. 37.

^v Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, 2004, pp. 28-29.

^{vi} Creel, Herrlee G., 1970.

^{vii} Liu I-ming, trans. Thomas Cleary, 1988.

of a snake shedding its old skin, which in Dzogchen traditionally illustrates the mode of death called *self-consuming like a fire*, which gives rise to the “body of light” (Tib., ökyiku; öphungⁱ) and which results from the second highest realization in the practice of the *Upadeshavarga* series of teachings (obtained by those who have developed to some point the fourth vision of Thögelⁱⁱ or the Yangthikⁱⁱⁱ): in this mode of death, after the practitioner passes away, his or her physical body gradually turns into light, ceasing to be tangible, and only those aspects of the body that lack sensitivity and that are always growing toward the outside (namely nails and hair), together with the practitioner’s clothes—remindful of the skin shed by a snake—stay behind as tangible remains. Since the teachings of Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu and Lieh-tzu—which Creel subsumed under the label *Contemplative Taoism*^{iv} and I subsume under the label *Taoism of Unorigination*—stressed the fact that the Fruit of true spiritual Paths is the realization of the uncreated, unborn, unconditioned true nature of reality, and since the teachings in question are so similar to those of the Dzogchen tradition, in case Taoism were actually linked to the latter, the Taoism so linked would no doubt be that of Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu and Lieh-tzu. And since it seems most unlikely that such an odd image as a snake shedding its skin may have been used by genetically linked traditions in neighboring countries to illustrate different occurrences, if the Taoism of these three Masters had actually been linked to the Dzogchen tradition, I would assume that it used the image in question to refer to the same realization it illustrates in the Dzogchen teachings, and that other forms of Taoism absorbed the image from it. (Roughly since the eighth century BC, Hsien Taoism has been bent on prolonging the human lifespan and, by means of *generative* methods, *pretending* to *produce* immortal bodies—a paramount contradiction, for as Buddhist doctrine makes it clear, all that is born, produced, compounded or conditioned [Pali, *sankhata*; Skt., *samskrita*; Tib., düje^v] is impermanent, and only the unborn, unproduced, uncompounded and unconditioned [Pali, *asankhata*; Skt., *asamskrita*; Tib., dümaje^{vi}] is beyond corruption, cessation and death. Not long after Chuang-tzu [ca. 369-286 BCE], and probably at the time of Lieh-tzu, in his *Pao-p’u-tzu* [“He Who Holds to Simplicity,” a pseudonym of the author] or *Nei P’ien*, Ko-hung [circa 283-343 BCE] referred to Chuang-tzu’s way as “pure conversation” (*ch’ing t’an*)—which Alan Watts translated as “nothing but a head trip”—and derided Chuang-tzu for saying that death should not be opposed.^{vii411} All of this demonstrates that this brand of Taoism could not have led to the realization represented by the image of the snake shedding its skin, suggesting that it incorporated the image in question from other traditions. In its turn, Chuan Chen Taoism, which traces its roots to Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu and Lieh-tzu, like the Taoism of these three great Masters seems to be a means for realizing the uncreated, unborn, unconditioned true nature of reality, thus going beyond rejection of death *and beyond death itself* [insofar as those who have fully realized their true nature to be the unborn,

ⁱ ‘Od-kyi sku; ‘od-phung.

ⁱⁱ Thod rgal.

ⁱⁱⁱ Yang thig.

^{iv} Creel, Herrlee G., 1970.

^v ‘Dus-byas.

^{vi} ‘Dus-ma-byas.

^{vii} Creel, Herrlee G., 1970, I, p. 22; Watts, Alan, 1975, written in 1973 with the collaboration of Al Chung-Liang Huang, p. 91; a partial English translation of Ko-hung’s writings appeared in 1967 in the book now available as Ware, James R., trans., 1981.

undying primordial condition, cannot be affected by death of the perishable], and seems to have many points of coincidence with Dzogchen; therefore, in the case of this type of Taoism, the image of the snake shedding its skin *might* have referred to an actual realization. [For a longer discussion of all this, cf. this endnote.ⁱ⁴¹²])

Keith Dowmanⁱⁱ also asserts that Taoism influenced Tibetan religion, but in his view the influence took place into Tibetan Buddhism, via Ch'an Buddhism. In fact, he seems to have plunged further into error, for he claimed that both *Ch'an* and Dzogchen derived from Shivaism, and that *Ch'an* exerted an important influence on Dzogchen. Once again, the direction in which influences actually occurred was turned upside down, and the universal ancestor of all vehicles was posited as a hybrid derived from some of the traditions that in reality may have derived from it. Furthermore, in the same book, Dowman has claimed that the term *chadräl*ⁱⁱⁱ, which he explained as denoting spontaneous activity beyond intentional action,^{iv}

...is probably derived from the Taoist notion *wu-wei*; Taoist concepts arrived in Dzogchen metaphysics *via* the Chinese *Ch'an* School.

It so happens that it is in Dzogchen Atiyoga that the principle of spontaneous accomplishment through non-action has its paramount expression. In fact, this principle, which in general is called *lhundrub*^v and which is also more specifically referred to as *thinle*^{vi} or *dzepa*^{vii 413}, is embodied in the higher Dzogchen practices (and in particular in the practice of Thögel and in the practices of the Yangthik), in a way and to a degree that is not matched by any of the practices of Ch'an Buddhism—and, as will be shown below, in case there were similar practices in Taoism, these may have had their origin in Dzogchen Atiyoga. These higher Dzogchen practices were not imported from any other tradition, as they are precisely what, since the very origin of the Dzogchen teachings in their present forms, has distinguished the Atiyoga from other teachings and practices. In fact, in the *Twelve Brief Tantras of the Single Sphere of Bodhichitta*^{viii 414}, containing the original verses of the *nyengyü*⁴¹⁵ of the *Oral Transmission of Dzogchen of Shang Shung* communicated by the great Bön teacher Shenrab Miwoche around year 1.800 BC⁴¹⁶ (and hence well over one millennium before the arising of Taoism, of Buddhism in general, and of *Ch'an* or *Zen* in particular), which at a later stage were put in writing and explicated by the great teacher Cherchen Nangzher Löpo^{ix}, we read^{x, 417}:

The Path is self-accomplished, beyond effort and progress...
The Fruit is self-accomplished in its own condition...
In the ultimate unborn dimension

ⁱ For a list of coincidences between Dzogchen and Taoism, see Capriles, 2000a, 2000b.

ⁱⁱ Dowman, Keith, Ed. & Trans., 1984, pp. 295-8.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Bya-bral*. Actually, as will be shown below, more pertinent to the subject under discussion are terms such as *thinle* (*phrin-las*), *dzepa* (*mdzad-pa*), and even *lhundrub* (*lhun-grub*).

^{iv} Dowman, Keith, Ed. & Trans., 1984, p. 243.

^v *Lhun-grub*.

^{vi} *Phrin-las*.

^{vii} *mDzad-pa*.

^{viii} In Tibetan *Byang sems thig le nyag gcig gi rgyud bu chung bcu gnyis*, op. 24: p. 171, 5.

^{ix} *Gyer chen snang bzher lod po*.

^x Op. 24: first two lines, p. 171, 5; last three lines, p. 172, 1.

abides the primordial gnosis without interruption—
the single sphere beyond the duality of birth and cessation.

These verses clearly express the principle of “Beyond Action,” summarized in the assertion that the Path does not involve either effort or progress, and the fact that the Truth to be realized is free from birth and as such cannot be *produced* and cannot be attained through contrived practices.

Moreover, the attainments of Dzogchen (and in particular of the practices of Thögel and the Yangthik) involve the spontaneous, actionless Buddhist activities called *thinle*ⁱ or *dzepa*ⁱⁱ, and when carried to their ultimate possibilities they culminate in one of the four modes of death characteristic of Dzogchen Atiyoga, which are not attained through the practices of Ch’an or Zen (a Mahayana tradition that does not feature the explanation of Vajra-nature in terms of the principles of *katak* and *lhundrub*, for it does not have the mastery of the *lhundrub* dynamic of energy at the root of practices such as those of Thögel and the Yangthik, or even the lower mastery of energy proper to the Path of transformation). Therefore, the concepts of achievement through non-action and of Awakening as involving spontaneous activities utterly free from intention and action must be acknowledged to be inherent to the primordial vehicle and universal ancestor of all vehicles. Though it was from Taoism that Ch’an or Zen absorbed the Chinese term *wei-wu-wei*, Taoism is posterior to Bönpo Dzogchen, with which it had a most intimate connection—and so one may assume that Taoism absorbed the corresponding concept from the Dzogchen Atiyoga, to which the principle of spontaneous accomplishment beyond action and of an ensuing spontaneous activity that is free of human intentionality is inherent. Furthermore, as noted at the end of the preceding section, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were Dzogchen Masters, and according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, they were, respectively, the 14th and 15th Patriarchs of the *Dhyana* (*Ch’an* or *Zen*) School in India; hence it would not be far-fetched to speculate that these Masters may have introduced into *Ch’an* or *Zen* concepts belonging to the Semdeⁱⁱⁱ series of *Ati*, which they may have adapted to the functional principles of the Mahayana. Moreover, with the passing of time there were many contacts between Dzogchen *Ati* and *Ch’an* or *Zen*; for example, Bodhidharma, who introduced *Ch’an* into China, was a link in the transmission of the *Anuyoga* (which throughout history has been applied in conjunction with the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, and whose Fruit, as we have seen, is called Dzogchen); later on, Namkhai Nyingpo, who was one of the 25 main disciples of Padmasambhava, as well as one of his 8 most selected disciples, became a Master of both schools; as the *Blue Annals*^{iv} note, Aro Yeshe Jungne^v was the seventh link in both the transmission of Tibetan *Ch’an* and of *Ati* Dzogpa chenpo;⁴¹⁸ likewise, Nubchen Sangye Yeshe was a Master of both *Ch’an* and Dzogchen—and so on.

It would be extremely naïve to believe that Taoism was known to Tibetans via *Ch’an* Buddhism; as noted above, Chinese Taoists and Tibetan Bönpos interacted in a very close manner during millennia, and Chinese Taoists have repeatedly asserted their tradition to be one and the same as Tibetan Bön. Furthermore, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu

ⁱ *Phrin-las*.

ⁱⁱ *mDzad-pa*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Sems-sde*.

^{iv} Roerich, George N., Trans. 1979, p. 167. Cf. also Dowman, Ed. & Trans., 1984, p. 350, note 19.

^v *A-ro Ye-shes ’Byung-gnas*.

has referred to extant Bön sources according to which the great sage Legtang Mangpo of China became a disciple of Shenrab Miwoche some fourteen centuries before the time of Lao-tzu, and carried the Master's teachings to China—just as other Masters carried them to India, Persia and so on. He writes:ⁱ

Shenrab Miwoche was born in Zhang-zhung, and was therefore a Tibetan, or better a Zhang-zhung-pa, though the Bön that he taught soon spread far beyond Zhang-zhung, to countries like Tazig (Persia or Tadzhikistan), India and China. Some credible Bön sources report that the great sages Mutsa Trahe of Tazig, Hulu Baleg of Sumba, Lhadag Nagdro of India, Legtang Mangpo from China, and Serthog Chejam of Khrom translated into their respective languages and spread in their native lands the teachings of Shenrab included in the four series (or four gates) of “divine Bön” (lha bön go zhiⁱⁱ)—the Shen of the Cha (Cha shenⁱⁱⁱ), the Shen of the Universe of Phenomena (Nang shen^{iv}), the Shen of Existence (Si shen^v) and the Shen of Magic Power (Tul shen^{vi})—and in the three series known as the Divine Bön of Ritual Offerings (Shökyi lhabön^{vii}), the Bön of Village Funeral Rites (Dronggi durbön^{viii}) and the Bön of Perfect Mind (Yangdagpai sembön^{ix})...

[It is] certain... that the Bön of Perfect Mind (Yangdagpai sembön) taught by Shenrab Miwoche was an archaic form of Dzogchen: in fact, we possess the list and the histories of all lineage Masters of Dzogchen of the Oral Transmission of Zhang-zhung (Zhang-zhung nyengyü^x). If Shenrab Miwoche taught Dzogchen, which is also the final aim⁴¹⁹ of all the teachings transmitted by Buddha Shakyamuni, we cannot doubt his extraordinary qualities; we can, moreover, deduce that Tibet in that period had not only a culture, but also an exceptional form of spiritual knowledge.⁴²⁰

Lineages of Transmission of the Nyingmapa Vehicles of Inner *Tantra* (Including the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*)

The transmission and teachings of the Nyingma vehicles of inner *Tantra* included in the Paths of transformation and spontaneous liberation have come to us through two different channels, which are: (1) the kama or ringyü kama^{xi} tradition of the “long lineages,” and (2) the terma or ringyü terma^{xii} transmission of the “short lineages.”

The Kama Tradition

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, 2004, pp. 28-29. The text was compared with Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, 1997, pp. 26-27, and a modification on the basis of the latter was done to the English version.

ⁱⁱ *Lha bon sgo bzhi*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Phywa gshen*.

^{iv} *sNang gshen*.

^v *Srid gshen*.

^{vi} *'Phrul gshen*.

^{vii} *bShos kyī lha bon*.

^{viii} *Grong gi 'dur bon*.

^{ix} *Yang dag pa'i sems bon*.

^x *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud*.

^{xi} *Ring-brgyud bka'-ma*.

^{xii} *Ring-brgyud gter-ma*.

The first—the kama tradition—consists in a continuous line of transmission, both of the state of rigpa, and of teachings, texts, practices, sadhanas, and even worldly realizations. The corresponding lineages are said to be “long” because in them the transmission has passed from Master to student in an uninterrupted succession since the introduction of the inner Tantras into our human world, and thus it involves many links.

This tradition comprises three principal lineages with their respective forms of transmission, which are:

(1) The direct and nondual transmission of the Buddha essence, corresponding to the state of rigpa (Presence, Awake Awareness or Truth) that consists in the unveiling of primordial gnosis, which in Tibetan is called *gyälwa gongpe gyüpa*ⁱ. Its origin is beyond time, in the *dharmakaya* dimension, personified as the *adi* or primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, whose timeless dimension is known as the “Akanishta heaven”.⁴²¹ As we have seen, it is said that the state of rigpa or Truth is “transmitted” through Vajrasattva (in *Mahayoga*) or through the Buddhas of the Five Families (in *Anuyoga*); however, we have also seen that, in a strict sense, for something to be transmitted there would have to have a transmitter and a receiver separate from him or her; since the very state of this “transmission” is absolutely beyond dualism, so that the duality of transmitter and receiver is absent, the term should not be understood in a literal manner (which is most evident in the case of the transmission of *Atiyoga*). As expressed in the *Derdü tsagyü*^{ii,iii}:

“I am at the same time the one who teaches and the one who receives the teaching.”⁴²²

(2) The symbolic transmission of the rigdzins or vidyadharas, known in Tibetan as rigdzin de gyüpa^{iv}, which was transmitted through the Lords of the Three Families (Mañjushri, Vajrapani and Avalokiteshwara) and, from the latter, through a series of nonhuman and human rigdzin.⁴²³

(3) The oral transmission by means of human links, known in Tibetan as gangzag nyenkungi gyüpa^v, which is not limited to the inner Tantras that contain the teachings of the Paths of transformation and spontaneous liberation, for there is also a transmission of this type in the case of the three outer Tantras containing the teachings of the Path of purification, as well as in that of the teachings of the *Sutrayana* (and, in particular, with regard to the *Mahayana* compilation accomplished by 500 scholars and 500 assistants under the patronage of King Lakshashva).

The lineages of the kama transmission may also be explained by distinguishing the specific origin and lines of transmission of each one of the three inner Tantras and their respective sections, but to do that more extensively than was done in the sketch offered in a previous section of this chapter would go far beyond the purpose of this book.⁴²⁴ For our aims, it is sufficient to point out that, although in the word kama the particle “ka”^{vi} literally means “word of Buddha,” this does not imply that this tradition only contains the words of Buddha Shakyamuni. For example, in the case of the kama

ⁱ *rGyal-ba dgongs-pa'i brgyud-pa*.

ⁱⁱ *bDer-'dus rTsa-rgyud*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tibetan Text 17. Quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 449.

^{iv} *Rig-'dzin brda'i brgyud-pa*.

^v *Gang-zag snyan-khung-gi brgyud-pa*.

^{vi} *bKa'*.

transmission of the teachings of Dzogchen *Ati*, the particle “ka” points out that these teachings have their origin in the *dharmakaya*—that is, in the primordial Buddha or *adi Buddha* Samantabhadra—and that, being essentially beyond time, they appear in all times and directions. Thus when it is said that the teachings of Buddhist *Atiyoga* come from Garab Dorje, reference is being made to the teachings of *Ati* existing in our time, for Garab Dorje was the first teacher in human form to receive these teachings *in their present form*, as well as the first link in the presently existing human transmission.⁴²⁵

The Terma Tradition

As we have seen, the terma tradition is the second pathway for the transmission of the state of rigpa, as well as of the teachings, texts, practices, sadhanas and so on pertaining to the Paths of transformation and spontaneous liberation⁴²⁶—but also of ritual objects, images, medicinal substances, and a series of other precious objects, as well as of worldly realizations. Lineages of this tradition are said to be “short” because they involve a much lesser number of human links than the kama tradition: transmission passes directly from Padmasambhava (eight century CE) to a Revealer or tertön (who could well be our contemporary), who transmits it to his or her true disciples and, most importantly, to his or her successor(s). It is for this reason that the teaching may be more effective: having passed through a lesser number of hands, it is less likely that the transmission may have been damaged because some of its links broke the *samaya* (and, if the tertön is our own teacher, there is no possibility that the transmission may have been damaged, unless we ourselves have broken the *samaya*). In particular, this type of transmission has made it possible, when time and circumstances are propitious, for the revelation of teachings or objects that either were not suitable for previous times, or that, had they been revealed in those times, in the best of cases would have been lost.

The individuals who reveal these teachings, objects, substances, etc., and who are called tertönsⁱ are neither angels without a solid, material organism with physiological necessities, nor world-renouncing saints who are an insurmountable gulf away from human passions. It is especially important to note, on the one hand, that the tertön who reveals complete cycles of teachings is compelled to take a consort,⁴²⁷ and, on the other hand, that in most cases, before tertöns have begun to discover terma, they have been regarded as ordinary individuals rather than as tulkus, scholars or practitioners.⁴²⁸

The essential nucleus of *Guru Padmasambhava*’s terma tradition consists in the “transmission of the cognitive mandate” or tergyaⁱⁱ. It is said that the great Master concealed many teachings in the continuum of primordial gnosis or awareness of his realized disciples through the power of the “transmission of the cognitive mandate,” upon which both Master and disciple remained in the state of indivisibility of realization and of the teaching thus hidden, and hence the teachings, the blessings and the corresponding attainments were conserved intact in the disciple’s continuum of primordial gnosis or awareness. However, it is the fact that the Master manifested the aspiration that the teaching be revealed at the appropriate moment for the benefit of

ⁱ *gTer-ston*.

ⁱⁱ *gTad-rgya*.

sentient beings, which makes it possible for the discovery of the teachings to effectively occur.

In connection with the above, Padmasambhava, as well as his principal Tibetan consort, Yeshe Tsogyälⁱ,⁴²⁹ and other “lords of the treasures” directly associated with them, hid teachings, papers with types of symbolic writing, and complete texts, as well as “material treasures” or dzeterⁱⁱ (including images, medicinal substances and ritual objects), in different places in the “physical” world, so that, when the propitious moment arrived, a particular individual would reveal them.

The terma tradition comprises six types or stages of lineage. The first three are shared by the kama transmission and were described upon considering this transmission: (1) the direct and nondual transmission of the essence of the Buddhas, corresponding to the state of rigpa or Truth that consists in the unveiling of primordial gnosis; (2) the symbolic transmission of the rigdzins or vidyadharas; and (3) the oral transmission through human links. Then we have the three lineages exclusive to the terma tradition, which are: (4) the transmission “empowered by (Awake) aspiration” or mönlam wangkurⁱⁱⁱ, which is the principal aspect of the transmission and corresponds to the cognitive mandate considered above; (5) the transmission based on prophetic authorization or lungten kabab^{iv}, in which the Master inspires the disciple and, indicating that in the future he or she will become a tertön, causes this to occur, and (6) the transmission entrusted to the dakinis or khandro tergya^v, in which the Master entrusts to the dakinis for protection the three main elements of the transmission: the treasure or terma, the revealer or tertön, and the treasure’s Masters and practitioners.

Though in general there are eighteen categories of terma, with regard to the way they are discovered there are two main categories, which are: (1) sater^{vi}, or “earth treasures,” and (2) gongter^{vii} or “treasures of Awake awareness.”

The first—the sater—are hidden in rocks, mountains, lakes, temples, images and even in the sky itself, and include material objects such as, for example, a roll of paper that is known as “yellow scroll” or shogser^{viii}⁴³⁰ and that contains some form of symbolic writing or dayik^{ix} serving as a key so that, on reading it, the tertön may discover the treasure *in his or her own Awake awareness*. This is so because the discovery of treasures consists in their appearance in the primordial empty expanse where phenomena manifest (*dharmadhatu*),⁴³¹ by the power of the self-arisen state of rigpa or Truth that manifests upon the self-reGnition of primordial gnosis.⁴³² For this reason, it is said that those who do not have a firm realization of the state of rigpa or Truth of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*, which embraces the primordial empty expanse and is inseparable from it, will never be able to discover a terma of Padmasambhava transmitted through the cognitive mandate.

ⁱ *Ye-shes mTsho-rgyal*.

ⁱⁱ *rDzas-gter*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sMon-lam dbang-bskur*.

^{iv} *Lung-bstan bka'-babs*.

^v *mKha'-'gro gtad-rgya*.

^{vi} *Sa-gter*.

^{vii} *dGongs-gter*.

^{viii} *Shog ser*.

^{ix} *brDa-yig*.

The second—the gongter—are not related to any type of material support (neither to a “yellow scroll” nor to anything else); although at times their discovery is catalyzed by the manifestation of visions and/or sounds (which may or may not include symbolic words), the tertön discovers the treasure (terⁱ) of Awake Awareness (gongⁱⁱ) when, the circumstances having matured and the auspicious moment arrived, the transmission of the cognitive mandate spontaneously awakes from the rigpa or Awake Awareness that makes the boundless expanse of primordial gnosis evident.

Lastly, it may be pointed out that there is also a category of revealed teachings that are known as “teachings of pure vision” or dagnangⁱⁱⁱ, but they are not terma, and can be discovered by less realized individuals. What has been explained in this section has been simplified as much as possible, for this is not the place to give a detailed description of all the possible types of treasures; for an intermediate explanation and for another more extensive one, I refer the reader to two specific texts published in Western languages.⁴³³

ⁱ *gTer*.

ⁱⁱ *dGongs*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Dag-snang*.

REFUGE, ROLE AND STATUS OF THE TEACHER, AND COMMITMENT AND PRECEPTS IN THE THREE PATHS

Refuge

One of the key concepts of the Path of renunciation is that of Refuge, which arose in the *Hinayana* but progressively spread to all Buddhist Paths and vehicles. In the face of the insecurity inherent in life and of the transitory problems that constantly occur in it, all human beings crave finding a stable refuge. The more naïve take refuge in religious beliefs and other ideologies, lovers, money, power, status, idolized personages (of pop culture, politics, religion, the academy, etc.), groups, fame and fans, drugs, and so on and on. However, it is not difficult to realize that these objects of refuge, instead of offering solace from insecurity, exacerbate our worries: if I take refuge in my lover, this will increase the insecurity associated with the possibility that she or he may prize or love another more than myself; if I take refuge in money, I will be worrying that it may be stolen or somehow I may lose it, or that stock markets may crash, etc.; if I take refuge in ideologies, I take the risk that they may fail, be refuted, show their flaws or be abandoned by the masses—and something of the kind is true of all mundane objects of refuge. There are those who take refuge in spiritual states that, being *produced*, are impermanent—but, as we have seen, these also offer no more than a temporary solace that at some point will be followed by the shock of having to face new, undesirable experiences.

The only secure, stable, everlasting Refuge lies in the definitive and irreversible consolidation of the Awake state, for only in this state no vicissitudes can affect us: neither the sensations that normally would be experienced as pain, nor illness, nor old age, nor death, nor any other circumstance will be able to alter the immutable condition of *total completeness / plenitude and perfection* that, being beyond dualism, is beyond acceptance, rejection and indifference (and therefore beyond the ephemeral, petty pleasure that arises from the first, the pain that arises from the second, and the neutral feeling issuing from the third), beyond life and death, beyond hope and fear, beyond dexterity and clumsiness. The *Mahayana* and higher vehicles refer to this condition of nonconceptual, absolute wisdomⁱ or primordial gnosis,ⁱⁱ as absolute Refuge, or as the supramundane Refuge directly received from the true nature of phenomena (i.e., from the *dharmata* or *chönyi*ⁱⁱⁱ).

ⁱ Skt., *prajñā*; Tib., sherab (*shes-rab*). Here these terms are to be understood in the sense they have in the *Prajñāparamita* teachings, when they are used to refer to absolute *prajñā*.

ⁱⁱ Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., yeshe (*ye-shes*).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Chos-nyid*.

Provisional and Definitive Refuge

In *The Precious Vase*, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu writes:⁴³⁴

There are two ways to understand the meaning of ‘taking refuge’: the provisional way and the definitive way.

Provisional refuge means taking refuge temporarily in a person, in a non-human being, in the power of a *rig ngag mantra*⁴³⁵ etc., with the aim of avoiding direct or indirect disturbances to one’s body, voice and mind—and even finding shelter in a cave or at the foot of a tree when caught in a downpour.

The aim of definitive Refuge, on the other hand, consists not only in overcoming momentary problems but also in resolving their cause or root, which is our dualism, in such a way as to obtain lasting release from the ocean of *samsara*. To this end we take Refuge in the Three Precious Jewels, that is, in the Teacher [Shakyamuni], who teaches the Path in a perfect way, in his teachings, which constitute the holy *dharma*, and in the noble *samgha* or community of those who help us apply such teachings in the right way.

In other words, provisional refuge is the refuge human beings in general, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, take in different mundane objects in order to avoid specific threats, whereas definitive Refuge is the Refuge that Buddhists take in the Three Precious Jewels (or in their equivalents in Paths other than that of renunciation, which will be considered below) as the means to attain the Awake state that, as we saw above, is the only secure, stable, everlasting Refuge.

Refuge on the Path of Renunciation

As already shown, it is as part of the method for having access to the absolute condition that is the only true, stable and immutable Refuge, that in the *Hinayana* (and in general in the entire Path of renunciation) one takes relative Refuge: (1) in the Buddha as the *nirmanakaya* who, having obtained the true, absolute Refuge that one wishes to obtain, became the source of the teachings of this Path; (2) in the *dharma* or teachings of the Buddha as the Path for reaching the true and absolute Refuge; and (3) in the *samgha* or community of practitioners as the true helpers with the practice aimed at gaining access to the true and absolute Refuge and, henceforth, at becoming firmly established in it. The third of these aspects is directly related to the role that teachers have in the *Hinayana* and gradual *Mahayana*, which will be considered in a subsequent section of this chapter, and which is that of elder members of the *samgha* who help one understand and apply the teachings correctly.

Concerning the way to take Refuge, in the *Hinayana*, which places so much emphasis on the taking of vows, Refuge ended up turning into a vow. In turn, we have seen that in the *Mahayana* the key concept is not that of taking vows that may by no means be transgressed, but that of engaging in a training that, contrariwise, implies the commitment to go beyond one’s limits if that is necessary in order to benefit others (even when this may be dangerous for one’s own comfort, security and so on); therefore, in the *Mahayana*, rather than being a vow that one takes, Refuge is a training one engages in. (However, once the *Mahayana* incorporated the system of vows from the *Hinayana*, subjecting it to a properly *Mahayana* motivation, intention and way of applying, this vehicle gave rise to what became known as the “Refuge vow and training of the *bodhisattva*.”) Furthermore, in the

Mahayana, once one attains nonconceptual, absolute *prajña* and thereby enters the Third Path, which is that of Vision, it is said that one has attained the absolute Refuge, which is the one referred to as the “supramundane Refuge received directly from the true nature of phenomena.”ⁱ

The above explanation of Refuge in the *Mahayana* is a literal, outer interpretation that is far from being the only one. It is said that in an inner *Mahayana* sense the Buddha is the state of Awakening, the *dharma* is the teachings and practices characteristic of the *Mahayana*, and the *samgha* is formed by the higher bodhisattvas (those in the third and four paths, i.e., from the first through the tenth level). Likewise, it is said that in a secret *Mahayana* sense the Buddha is the *dharmakaya*, the *dharma* is the *sambhogakaya*, and the *samgha* is the *nirmanakaya*.⁴³⁶ Only in the last acceptance is Refuge absolute, for it is only in the condition of indivisibility of the three kayas that nothing can harm us or affect us negatively.

When all Paths and vehicles are taken into account, the conventional Refuge of the *Sutrayana* is the outer Refuge.⁴³⁷ Padmasambhava explained this Refuge in characteristically *Mahayana* terms by emphasizing compassion and working for others; noting that the essence of taking Refuge is the aspiration to attain supreme Awakening, together with commitment to compassion; and asserting that it is called Refuge because it releases from fear of the three lower states and from wrong beliefs that attribute absolute, inherent truth and self-existence to the impermanent aggregates.ⁱⁱ He further stated that this Refuge has three causes, which are fear of the suffering of *samsara*, faith in the Three Jewels as the place of Refuge, and recognition of the Three Jewels as the object of Refuge; that its object is the Three Jewels, the only means to bring about the cessation of birth-and-death; that the requisites of the one who takes it are aspiration, devotion and faith, as well as always keeping in mind the qualities of the Three Jewels (which implies recognizing that it would not make sense to take Refuge in conditioned and samsaric entities or conditions, such as the deities of eternalists, and that it only makes sense to take it in the state of Buddhahood, unconditioned and nirvanic, which is the sole place of freedom in all respects); that the method of taking Refuge should be based on devotion through body, voice and mind, fear of the three lower states of *samsara*, trust in the power of the Three Jewels, and stable faith and compassion; and that the intention in taking it should be the liberation of all beings, as otherwise one’s selfish intention will assert and maintain the illusion of selfhood. This last point explains the reason why we recite: “In order to liberate all beings from the suffering of *samsara*, I and all beings of the three worlds take Refuge until we have reached the essence of Awakening.”⁴³⁸

Refuge on the Path of Transformation

As we have seen, according to the classification of the nine vehicles into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation, the views and methods of the Path of transformation in their entirety were introduced into the human world by *nirmanakaya* mahasiddhas who received them through *sambhogakaya*

ⁱ Skt., *dharmata*; Tib., *chönyi* (*chos-nyid*).

ⁱⁱ According to a terma by Nyang Nyima Özer (*Nyang Nyi ma ’od zer*: 1124-1192), this explanation is part of the advice given by the great teacher of Oddiyana to his consort Yeshe Tsogyäl. See Tibetan Text 19: A: p. 256, 6; B: p. 20, 3; quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 99-101.

manifestations, and who then passed them down through a line of transmission that finally reached our teachers in human form, who obtained the realization of the state that the teachings of this Path communicate and, in their turn, obtained the capacity to transmit it. This is why true Tantric Masters have the capacity to transfer the power of this state to us by means of the Tantric empowerment, which when fully effective may allow a “sample of primordial gnosis” or *peyi yeshe*ⁱ to manifest in our own continuum of experience. This “sample of primordial gnosis” consists in a first direct unveiling of the primordial gnosis that is the true condition both of ourselves and of the rest of the universe, which takes place by the power of the transmission, as we apply methods related to it. Then, even after the veil of delusorily valued conceptualization is reestablished, since we have apprehended the true condition at least for an instant, we know what is and thus we no longer depend on explanation or analogy. Furthermore, it is even possible that we may have learned how to have access to it again, and since we have also received the power of the transmission, we may have the capacity to practice on our own.

This is why, on the Path of transformation, Refuge is taken in the Master (*guru* or *lama*ⁱⁱ) rather than in the Buddha: the Master is no other than Vajradhara and as such is the ultimate source of the empowerment that allows the primordial condition to unveil in our continuum, as well as of the methods we apply (for here the methods are the deities that we visualize, which were transmitted by the human teachers who first realized the respective Tantric methods) and of our realization, which is totally dependent on our devotion to the teacher, on the way we perceive the teacher, on our keeping the commitment or *samaya* with the teacher, etc. Furthermore, the condition that directly unveils to us when the sample of primordial gnosis or *peyi yeshe* manifests, and in which we aspire to firmly establish ourselves, is the teacher’s state of true, absolute Refuge. In short, the Teacher is the source of all Empowerments, Methods and Realizations. Padmasambhava stated:ⁱⁱⁱ

You should understand that the Teacher is more important than the Buddhas of the thousand kalpas, for all the Buddhas of past kalpas have attained Awakening by following a Teacher. Before the arising of a Teacher not even the name “Buddha” existed.

And also:^{iv}

The Teacher is Buddha, the Teacher is the *dharma* and equally the Teacher is the *samgha*: He or she is the root of the Three Jewels. Even if you neglect any other offering but honor the Teacher perfectly, satisfying him or her, then all the siddhis you desire will manifest.

Likewise, just as on the Path of renunciation we take Refuge in the *dharma* (externally identified with the teachings given by Shakyamuni) as the Path to tread in order to attain the condition of true, absolute Refuge, on the Path of transformation we take

ⁱ *dPe-yi ye-shes*.

ⁱⁱ *bLa-ma*.

ⁱⁱⁱ According to a terma by Nyang Nyima Özer (*Nyang Nyi ma 'od zer*: 1124-1192), the following words are part of the advice given by the great teacher of Oddiyana to his consort Yeshe Tsogyäl. See Tibetan Text 19: A: p. 256, 6; B: p. 20, 3. Quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 104.

^{iv} *Ibidem*.

Refuge in the “meditation deity”ⁱ insofar as this deity is the main method of the practice that the Tantric Master teaches as the Path to gain access to the true and absolute Refuge.

Finally, just like on the Path of renunciation one takes Refuge in the *samgha* or community of practitioners as the true helpers of the practice to be done in order to establish oneself in the state of true and absolute Refuge, on the Path of transformation one takes Refuge in the dakinis (khandroⁱⁱ), owners of the Teachings, who, together with the guardians,ⁱⁱⁱ the pawos and pamos, and the *vajra* brothers and sisters, on this “swift” Path are the true helpers of the practice.⁴³⁹

Padmasambhava^{iv} notes that to take Refuge the *Vajrayana* way, which when all Paths and vehicles are taken into account is the one that is referred to as inner Refuge, one has to enter the Path of Secret *Mantra*;⁴⁴⁰ that the way of taking it must be based on respect and devotion through body, voice and mind; that the three specific intentions of the individual taking Refuge must be to see the teacher as Buddha, never to forsake the meditation deity even at the cost of his or her own life, and to worship all khandros or dakinis without interruption; that the duration of Refuge is from moment of taking the commitment of *bodhichitta* during the initiation until attaining the level of Vajradhara;⁴⁴¹ that the secondary cause is having respect and devotion toward the Path of Secret *Mantra* (*Guhyamantrayana*); and that its aim and benefits are to make one suitable to the tread the *Mantrayana* Path and to receive the empowering flow that is proper to this Path.

However, when the *Vajrayana* Path of transformation is considered on its own, the Refuge that in this discussion I have associated with this Path is the outer Refuge, as it is the one that is referred to literally in the texts; and in that case the inner Refuge is the one taken in the true nature of each of the three aspects of the *vajra* body: (1) the thigle (seed-essence *cum* energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness);⁴⁴² (2) the energy currents or “winds”;⁴⁴³ and (3) the channels.⁴⁴⁴ In the same context, the secret Refuge may be said to be the three kayas as they are understood in the context of the *Vajrayana* Path of transformation.

In actual practice, in the Path of transformation there is no need to take any Refuge vow, as it suffices to recognize the three Refuges in the Tantric Initiation, or else to take Refuge on one’s own the *Mahayana* way, simultaneously with the commitment of *bodhichitta*. However, in everyday life Tantric practitioners, visualizing in front of them the field of merits consisting in the *guru* (which in the case of the Nyingmapa may be represented by Padmasambhava), the *deva*(s), and the *dakini*(s) and so on, in the context of a ritual recite the phrases *namo guru bhya*, *namo deva bhya*, *namo dakini bhya*.

Refuge on the Path of Spontaneous liberation

We have seen that on the Path of renunciation the source of the teachings is the Buddha of our age—the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni—and that therefore Refuge is taken principally in the Buddha. We have also seen that on the Path of transformation the true

ⁱ Skt., *deva*, *devata*, or *ishta devata*; Tib., *yidam* (*yi-dam*).

ⁱⁱ *mKha*’-‘gro.

ⁱⁱⁱ Skt., *dharmapala*; Tib., *chökyong* (*chos-skyong*).

^{iv} According to a terma by Nyang Nyima Özer (*Nyang Nyi ma ’od zer*: 1124-1192), the following words are part of the advice given by the great teacher of Oddiyana to his consort Yeshe Tsogyäl. See Tibetan Text 19: A: p. 256, 6; B: p. 20, 3. Quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 101-102.

source of empowerment and blessings is the Master, and that therefore Refuge is taken principally in the Master. Well, on the Path of spontaneous liberation the source of the teachings, blessings and realization is our own state of rigpa,⁴⁴⁵ which is not in any sense or to any degree different from the *dharmakaya* Samantabhadra, root of the transmission of these teachings, so that it is this state that constitutes the true Refuge.

In fact, concerning the type of Refuge corresponding to the Path of spontaneous liberation, which in comparison with the Refuge of other Paths and vehicles is referred to as secret Refuge,⁴⁴⁶ Padmasambhavaⁱ stated that the objects of Refuge are tawaⁱⁱ or Vision, gompaⁱⁱⁱ or Contemplation, and chöpa^{iv} or Behavior. As seen in the chapter on the Path of spontaneous liberation, as is the case with every Buddhist vehicle, *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo has three aspects, which are the Base, the Path and the Fruit—each one of which has in its turn three aspects. As we have also seen, the first of the aspects of the Path of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo is tawa or Vision, which, unlike the tawas of other vehicles, is not an intellectual view with regard to reality, but the previously mentioned state of rigpa: in the Path of spontaneous liberation this is the equivalent of the Buddha in the Path of renunciation, and of the Master in the Path of transformation, and as such here it is the first element of Refuge.⁴⁴⁷ With regard to this element, Padmasambhava asserted that the tawa should be based on certainty, which in terms of the three phrases of Garab Dorje’s testament means that for this aspect of Refuge to be truly effective one should be able to remain free of doubts with regard to the fact that the condition that unveiled itself in the Introduction is the true condition of all entities and experiences. With regard to specific intentions, Padmasambhava noted that tawa involves not harboring any attachment or desire to obtain Awakening or relinquish *samsara* (the point in this being that the Tawa of *Ati* is the unveiling of the primordial state corresponding to Awakening, which does not allow the manifestation of hope and fear—which in their turn are the main demons with regard to whom one is taking Refuge).

Just as on the Path of renunciation it was the *dharma* taught by Shakyamuni that was to be practiced, and on the Path of transformation the methods of the practice were the meditation deities, on the Path of spontaneous liberation what is to be applied is the second aspect of this Path, which as we have seen is what is known as gompa or Contemplation, defined as “continuing in the tawa or Vision.” Thus continuing in the intrinsically all-liberating nondual state free from delusory valuation-absolutization, so that all thoughts and perceptions that otherwise would veil this state liberate themselves spontaneously, in this Path corresponds to the *dharma* on the Path of renunciation and the yidam on the Path of transformation: it is the second element of Refuge. With regard to this element, Padmasambhava noted that the gompa should be based on the direct Seeing [(of) the true condition of all reality]: it must consist in *the continuity of this Seeing*.⁴⁴⁸ Furthermore, Padmasambhava said that one should not have any concept of being in “Contemplation” or in “meditation:” the point is that the Contemplation of *Ati* lies in being beyond the limits

ⁱ According to a terma by Nyang Nyima Özer (*Nyang Nyi ma ’od zer*: 1124-1192), the following words are part of the advice given by the great teacher of Oddiyana to his consort Yeshe Tsogyäl. See Tibetan Text 19: A: p. 256, 6; B: p. 20, 3. Quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 102.

ⁱⁱ *lTa-ba*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *sGom-pa*.

^{iv} *sPyod-pa*.

established by concepts,⁴⁴⁹ and if the thought of being in meditation arises and does not liberate itself spontaneously, this means *samsara* has interrupted our Contemplation.

Finally, just as on the Path of renunciation the true helpers of the practice were the members of the *samgha* (which in the external sense was the community of monks and nuns), and just as on the Path of transformation they were the dakinis, together with the guardians of the teachings, the pawos and pamos and the *vajra* brothers and sisters, on the Path of spontaneous liberation the true helper of the practice is the third aspect of the Path, which is *chöpa* or Behavior—with regard to which Padmasambhava said that “one should neither accept nor reject anything, thus never falling into partiality” (so that in this regard one should be like a pig or a dog, which will gobble shit as enthusiastically as caviar, beyond discrimination). The point is that the *chöpa* of *Atiyoga* consists in the spontaneous flow of actionless activities that manifests when the state of *rigpa* that is the essence of *gompa* or Contemplation is carried beyond the limits of sessions or thuns—and this implies being beyond acceptance and rejection and therefore beyond partiality insofar as the state of *rigpa* is totally beyond judgment. If at some point the continuity of the state of *rigpa* is interrupted, we must maintain the same impartiality beyond acceptance and rejection, and hence our apparently indiscriminate courses of behavior, or the disapproving opinions of others concerning these courses of behavior, will cause our judgments automatically to induce conflict—and in *Atiyoga* the turning of contradiction into conflict is the essential catalyst of the process of spontaneous liberation allowing us to proceed swiftly on the Path.⁴⁵⁰

For example, when we act like bodhisattvas and hence the way we are perceived by others causes us to experience a pleasant feeling tone, it is extremely easy to forget the practice and be carried away by the habit of clinging to our thoughts. Contrariwise, when the way others perceive us induces in us an unpleasant feeling tone, this unpleasant feeling can be effectively used as an alarm reminding us to look at our thoughts in the ways prescribed by the teachings, so that they liberate themselves spontaneously—or, if we have developed a higher capacity, it may directly result in the spontaneous liberation of those thoughts. However, this does not mean that we must devise specific courses of action that we expect will have a pre-conceived effect on ourselves or others: the essence of *chöpa* or Behavior is that it must be uncontrived—and in fact to a great extent the way it manifests will depend on the individual’s idiosyncratic delusion, preponderant passions and so on.

One of the most concise and yet most precise keys to understanding the *chöpa* of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* may be the following stanza, which Dudjom Rinpoche (Jigdräl Yeshe Dorje) wrote about it in the poem entitled *Calling the Lama from Afar*:

The careless craziness of destroying clinging to a style...
may this human lifetime be spent in this State of uninhibited, naked ease.

Throughout history, many consummate Dzogchen practitioners manifested extremely unconventional modes of Behavior, and the dubious reputation they gained became a great help to their practice. However, each must behave in terms of his or her level of realization (or lack of it): if those who are not highly realized implemented such courses of action, the medicine would turn into poison. How sad would it be to inflate our egos by being seen as mad yogis, Mahasiddhas or the like! Far more reasonable than imitating the legendary figures of the distant past would be to find inspiration in the conduct of our own teacher. However, this does not mean that we should *imitate* him or her: Firstly,

a Master may have to show an authority and an imperviousness that would not at all befit those who are not Masters; secondly, finding inspiration in the teacher's conduct is not the same as *imitating* that conduct, for imitation sustains the dualistic control of conduct that the Behavior of Dzogchen is meant to help us surpass.

In particular, we should keep in mind that the Behavior of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, if genuine, will at no point neglect the needs of others. So long as we act spontaneously in the continuity of the Vision or tawa, we are free from the belief in a self and from the selfishness that issues from this belief, and since we do not experience other beings or the world as external, we spontaneously care for them the way deluded beings care for their own bodies. In turn, when the arising of delusion interrupts the continuity of the Vision or tawa, we must apply the principle of self-responsibility on the basis of the “presence of responsible awareness” (tenpa dangshe zhingyiⁱ). Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu illustrated “responsible awareness” (dangshe zhin)ⁱⁱ with the example of a glass containing poison: whoever has a responsible awareness knows the effects of poison and therefore does not drink from the glass.ⁱⁱⁱ In turn, “presence” (tenpa)^{iv} indicates the lack of distractedness that prevents us from *inadvertently* drinking from the glass. Hence Padmasambhava's renowned statement: “Though my Vision is ampler than the sky, my observation of the law of cause and effect is finer than sand.”⁴⁵¹

At any rate, all that was said in the above paragraphs concerning the chöpa of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo should allow us to understand why on the Path of spontaneous liberation chöpa is the equivalent of the *samgha* on the Path of renunciation and of the *dakini* on the Path of transformation, and why as such it is the third element of Refuge.

To conclude the discussion of the Refuge of Ati Dzogpa Chenpo that here is being referred to as secret Refuge, it must be remarked that with regard to it Padmasambhava said about it:^v

The person should have supreme capacity and aspiration to Awakening
With regard to its duration, it lasts until irreversible total Awakening.
As for the secondary cause, you take Refuge with the wish not to be reborn.
Concerning its benefits, it serves to attain perfect Awakening in this very lifetime.

In this Path, Refuge is not taken by means of a ceremony, nor is it received in the context of an initiation; rather, the individual who, with pure motivation, aspires to attain realization and thus studies with and follows a teacher, automatically has taken Refuge in the teacher and the teaching—which in this Path is the essence of Refuge in the outermost sense of the term. Thereafter, once truly on the Path, whenever the state of rigpa manifests, the individual is in the condition of Refuge in the innermost sense of the term.

ⁱ *Dran-pa dang-shes bzhin-gyi.*

ⁱⁱ *Dang-shes bzhin.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, 1995.

^{iv} *Dran-pa.* This term, which translates the Pali *sati* and the Sanskrit *smṛiti*, has been rendered into English as “mindfulness,” “collectedness,” “attention,” etc. In Pali, the foundations of *sati* or mindfulness, which are four (that of the body, that of the feelings, that of the mind, and that of mental objects), are called *satipatthana*.

^v The following words are part of the advice given by the great teacher of Oddiyana to his consort Yeshe Tsogyäl according to Tibetan Text 19: A: p. 256, 6; B: p. 20, 3. Quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 102.

The above should not be understood to mean that in the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* we do not do any kind of ritual Refuge practice. In general, Dzogchen practitioners regularly do a Tantric style Refuge practice, visualizing the *guru* or lama in the space in front of them (or, alternatively, over their own head)—which, if carried out with supreme devotion, is an essential key for effective progress on the Path, as this practice may have a great value as a wish-Path or *mönlam*ⁱ helping us to open ourselves up to the transmission, so that we may actually receive it.⁴⁵² Furthermore, realization absolutely depends on the manner in which our relationship with the physical Master from whom we receive the transmission evolves and, as will be seen in a subsequent section of this chapter, particularly on the way we maintain our commitment or *samaya* with him or her.

The Role and Status of the Teacher

Role and Status of the Teacher in the Path of Renunciation

Concerning the relationship between students and those from whom they receive instruction, each vehicle of the Path of renunciation has its particular norms and outlook; however, it must be noted that in the gradual varieties of the Path of renunciation the figure of a Master bearing unquestionable authority is nonexistent.

In the *Hinayana*, the shravakas, as well as those would-be pratyekabuddhas who live at a time when a Buddha's teaching is flourishing,⁴⁵³ must learn limitlessly from their older *kalyanamitta*ⁱⁱ or “noble friends.” In particular, in a Buddhist monastery each novice chooses, among the older monks, one to instruct him in the *dhamma*,ⁱⁱⁱ whom he will call *achariya*,^{iv} and another one who will instruct him in the norms of discipline, whom he will refer to as *upajjhaya*.^v Nevertheless, novices who receive instruction do not have to make a commitment of absolute obedience to either of the two types of instructor, insofar as they are neither the source of the teachings nor infallible authorities, but fellow members of the *sangha*^{vi} who, being more learned and experienced, are capable of being “true helpers with the practice” (which is how the *sangha* was defined in the context of the *Sutrayana* in the previous section of this chapter).

In the gradual *Mahayana*, students must also learn limitlessly from their *kalyanamitra*^{vii} or older “noble friends,” and concerning such precious friends the situation in general is very much as in the *Hinayana*. One minor difference between the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana* in this regard is that, since the inner *Mahayana sangha* consists of the higher bodhisattvas, who are those who have reached the first level but have not gone

ⁱ *sMon-lam*.

ⁱⁱ This word is Pali; its Sanskrit equivalent is *kalyanamitra*.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is the Pali word corresponding to the Sanskrit term *dharma* (Tib., *chö* [*chos*]; Chin., *fa*; Jap., *ho*).

^{iv} This word is Pali; its Sanskrit equivalent is *acharya*, which was used in the *Hinayana* communities of Northern India. Since monastic institutions always belong to the *Hinayana*, independently of whether they adhere to the views and practices of the *Mahayana* (and even of the *Vajrayana*), the term was also used, and is still used, in the monastic communities professing the views and practices of the Ample Vehicle.

^v This term is Pali; its Sanskrit equivalent is *upadhyaya*, which was used in the *Hinayana* communities of Northern India. As stated in the preceding note, the term was also used, and is still used, in the monastic communities professing the views and practices of the Ample Vehicle.

^{vi} This term is Pali; its Sanskrit equivalent is *sangha*.

^{vii} As has already been seen, this word, which is Sanskrit, has its Pali equivalent, which is *kalyanamitta*.

beyond the tenth, in the *Mahayana* the “true helpers with the practice” may be laymen rather than monks or nuns.⁴⁵⁴ In fact, it would be difficult to conceive a better *dharma* friend than the Lichchavi Vimalakirti.

Finally, in the sudden *Mahayana*, corresponding to *Ch’an* or *Zen*, students do not learn from kalyanamitras or “noble friends” wielding no special authority to command others, but from the *acharya*, who in this tradition has practically the same commanding authority as the *guru* or *vajracharya* of the Path of transformation.

Role and Status of the Teacher in the Path of Transformation

The role of the teacher in the Path of transformation is very different from what it is in the Path of renunciation. As we have seen, here the source of the teachings and of realization is not Shakyamuni Buddha, but the Tantric Master (the *guru* or *vajracharya*): it is he or she that is the source of the empowerment that enables the disciple to directly experience the sample of primordial gnosis that will set him or her on the Path in the true sense of the word, as well as the source of the student’s eventual realization. In fact, the state we want to reach is the state of the teacher, and therefore its attainment totally depends on our relationship with her or him. So true is this that, as we have seen, in the *Vajrayana* it is said that before the teacher existed, not even the name of Buddha existed, and it is asserted that realization depends completely on the teacher. Furthermore, in this Path reliance on the teacher is so pivotal that the results of the transmission that we receive depend on the way we perceive her or him: it is said that if students perceive the teacher as a Buddha, they will have the possibility of obtaining the realization of a Buddha; if they perceive the teacher as a *vidyadhara* or *rigdzin*,⁴⁵⁵ they may possibly obtain that of a *vidyadhara* or *rigdzin*; if they perceive the teacher as a *mahasiddha*, they may be able to obtain that of a *mahasiddha*; if they perceive the teacher as a *siddha*, they will have the possibility of obtaining that of a *siddha*; if they perceive the teacher as a *yogi*, it is likely that they may obtain that of a *yogi*; if they perceive the teacher as a *bodhisattva*, they have the possibility of obtaining that of a *bodhisattva*—and if they perceive the teacher as a dog or as a demon, they will be able to obtain that of a dog or that of a demon, respectively. This implies that, as we will see in the next section of this chapter, this vehicle involves the commitment or Tantric *samaya* to perceive the teacher in a pure manner, and our realization depends on the degree to which we succeed in maintaining this commitment.

The above explains why on the Path of transformation an absolute authority is attributed to the *vajracharya* or *Vajra* Master, who has the authority to dictate to his or her disciples what they must do, who must be the object of the latter’s utmost respect, and whom they must hold in a position clearly superior to their own. This, however, does not mean that they must regard him or her as inherently superior to themselves; it simply means that they must see him or her as the embodiment of the state that they consider to be supreme and that, precisely through the transmissions and teachings that they receive from him or her, they themselves want to reach.

Role and Status of the Teacher in the Path of Spontaneous liberation

In the Path of spontaneous liberation things are radically different from all the other Paths. In fact, as noted in the previous section, on the Path of spontaneous liberation the

teacher, in the most genuine and profound sense of the term, is the practitioner's own Vision or tawa. This does not mean, however, that in it there is no place for the Master as an external individual in human form. In fact, since the time of Garab Dorje, no individual has been born who could derive the complete system of teachings and practices making up *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* from his own Vision or tawa, Contemplation or gompa, and Behavior or chöpa: all Masters have had to rely on the transmission initiated by the supreme Master Garab Dorje, lord of all rigdzins, who historically became the source of the teachings of *Atiyoga* in their Buddhist form upon directly transmitting the patency of the primordial condition according to the teaching of the single state that transcends effort, *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*, "the total completeness / plenitude and perfection (of the primordial state)." Not even those tertöns who obtain the first unveiling of primordial gnosis on their own and without the instructions and empowering of an external teacher, can do without the transmission and the teachings that are received from the external teacher in human form, who is of primordial importance on this Path.

In the Path of spontaneous liberation disciples must be conscious that Garab Dorje is the supreme Master who introduced in our world the teachings that they practice, and when they do an external *guru-yoga* practice in the Tantric manner they must represent the source of the transmission by his image, or by that of Padmasambhava, who is the source of this transmission in Tibet. Likewise, they must firmly adhere to the instructions of the external teacher—who, just as in the Path of transformation, has the rank of *guru* or *vajracharya*—and offer him or her the utmost respect.⁴⁵⁶

However, by means of their practice, disciples on the Path of spontaneous liberation must acquire sufficient familiarity with the Vision or tawa and sufficient confidence in it as to be able to become autonomous and self-sufficient, so that, as a result of treading the Path, their own state of rigpa or Truth becomes their direct source of inspiration and point of reference. In fact, a true student is not a blind person and a true Master is not a guide dog; the true Master leads students to See, so that they do not depend on him or her, and the true student is the one who succeeds in Seeing. If a teacher behaves like a seeing-eye dog, it is because he or she does not See—and, when the blind lead the blind, they fall together into the abyss.⁴⁵⁷

All this allows us to understand why it is said that the principle of the Path of spontaneous liberation is self-responsibility rather than putting ourselves totally under the authority of others:⁴⁵⁸ while in the state of rigpa (Awake Awareness or Truth), pure spontaneity is the guide of Behavior; when the state of rigpa is not manifest, the practitioner must keep in all circumstances the "presence (or mindfulness) of responsible awareness" (Tib., *tenpa dangshe zhingyi*) that will be explained in Part Two of this book.

Commitment, Precepts and Vows

Vows and Training on the Path of Renunciation

As we have seen, among the vehicles of the Path of renunciation, the *Hinayana* is most strictly based on the principle of renunciation, associated with the adoption of vows that may not be broken for any reason, while the *Mahayana* is based on the principle of training, which implies the commitment to go beyond one's own limits (and even to break

one's vows and transgress the rules of behavior established by Buddhism) if that is necessary to benefit others, and one is certain that the result of one's actions will be good.

For the *Hinayana*, the supreme form of undertaking the practice is to become a monk or nun, which is a quite obvious form of renunciation. Otherwise we must take one or another of the alternative sets of *Pratimoksha*ⁱ vows or "vows for individual liberation" offered by the *Vinaya*,⁴⁵⁹ and keep them steadfastly, trying not to break them for any reason. Conversely, we have seen that the principle of the *Mahayana* is not that of taking vows, but that of undertaking a training the base of which is the intention to help all sentient beings surmount their problems and, specially, overcome suffering altogether by attaining Awakening or at least individual liberation. Here, instead of being bound by inviolable precepts, practitioners are *constrained to break whatever precepts or limits they may have imposed on themselves*, provided their intention is to benefit others, and they are certain that their actions will be effective in achieving this aim. This is owing to the fact that, while the aim of the *Hinayana* is to free oneself from suffering, that of the *Mahayana* is to free the totality of sentient beings from it—even if one has to face various sufferings in order to achieve this goal. Consequently, while in the *Hinayana* the character of an action depends exclusively on whether the type of action involved is sanctioned by the teachings, forbidden by them, or considered neutral, in the *Mahayana* its character depends on the *intention* with which it is carried out: if the intention is good, the action will be good and will produce positive *karma*, even if some *Hinayana* vow was broken in order to carry it out.

Even though the base of the *Mahayana* is not the adoption of the vows established by the *Vinaya*, but the principle of training, the influence of the *Hinayana* principle of taking vows resulted in the establishment in the *Mahayana* of the *bodhisattva* vows. Insofar as these belong to the *Mahayana*, they do not establish absolute rules of behavior to be kept even at the cost of one's life, but, on the contrary, compel the practitioner to break any *Hinayana* vow he or she may have taken, or whatever general prohibition on the levels of body and voice may have been set by the Buddhist teachings, provided he or she *intends* to benefit others, and is certain that the actions involved will achieve this aim. For example, a *Mahayana* practitioner must carry out any of the seven nonvirtuous actions related to body and voice if his or her intention is to benefit others and there is certainty that the result will be good; however, she or he can under no circumstances carry out any of the three nonvirtuous actions related to the level of mind. For example, one could save someone's life by lying, or for example by stealing a weapon and then hiding it—which might be most beneficial not only for the person whose life was saved, but also for the one whom we saved from creating such a heavy *karma* (and for many others if the one whose life we save is an Awake One or another type of benefactor of humankind). However, by craving other people's property, by manifesting malevolence, or by upholding an erroneous view, there is no way we may benefit anyone, and on the contrary we are quite certain to harm ourselves.

Furthermore, even though the *Mahayana* is not based on the principle of controlling our physical existence by means of vows, insofar as its teachings are mainly related to our corporeal existence and the material level, it is held to belong to the "Path of renunciation." And insofar as both have to do with the material level, the *Hinayana* vows and the *Mahayana* training are limited to the waking state, and both come to an end at death. For example, monks or nuns are forbidden to engage in any kind of sexual activity while awake; however, it is not prohibited for them to have an erotic dream once they have fallen asleep,

ⁱ This is the Sanskrit word; Pali, *Pratimokkha*; Tib., *sosor tharpa* (*so-sor thar-pa*).

or to ejaculate⁴⁶⁰ with their “physical” body because of the stimulation produced by the dream.

Precepts on the Path of Transformation

On the Path of transformation the regulation of behavior depends on a principle radically different from those proper to the Path of renunciation: that of the Tantric promise or commitment, which is known as *samaya*. Since this Path is related to the energy level, which is not interrupted by sleep and is not cut off by death as material existence is, the precepts corresponding to the Tantric *samaya* are not limited to the waking state, nor do they come to an end when the practitioner dies.

When practitioners receive an initiation of the outer Tantras, they must promise (in some cases by touching during the initiation a *mala* or rosary that the Master presents them) that they will recite daily the *mantra* that is transmitted to them, and that they will maintain certain types of “pure” conduct, etc. This is, in a nutshell, the *samaya* of these Tantras.

When we receive a transmission belonging to the Path of method of an inner *Tantra* (for example, of *Mahayogatantra*), instead of the commitment to maintain certain types of externally “pure” conduct, we will acquire, among others, the commitment to go beyond discrimination between “pure” and “impure.” On this level of *Tantra*, it is imperative to entirely transcend judgment and discrimination by discovering the state of “one taste” or *rochik*,ⁱ just as in the formless *Mahamudra* teaching of Tantrism (which, as we have seen, in its present form is very similar to the teachings of the Semde series of Dzogchen). However, whereas in the *Mahamudra* teaching the yogis are not required to carry out some specific type of action, on the Path of method of the inner Tantras it is imperative to manifest a “resolute conduct” or *tulzhug*ⁱⁱ⁴⁶¹ that requires the individual to perform actions that the “lower” vehicles would consider impure—the most widespread and well-known example of which is the obligation to eat meat and drink alcohol in the ritual called *ganapuja*.⁴⁶²

As the Master Namkhai Norbu has said, “one taste” does not mean to mentally put all phenomena together and convince oneself that they all have the same taste, but to discover the single, unaltered nondual awareness that underlies the multifarious pleasant, unpleasant and neutral experiences, and remain in that single awareness, which does not discriminate between the experiences it manifests—all of which are the same to it—and is not altered by any possible experience. That awareness has been compared to a mirror that reflects anything that is put in front of it, for it is beyond discrimination and therefore is unable to refuse to reflect some kinds of objects or to agree to reflect other kinds of object, and is impartial toward reflections insofar as it does not derive pleasure from nice ones or disgust from unpleasant ones. In turn, “one taste” has been compared to discovering the single condition of the mirror in which the multiple reflections manifest and which, being unaltered by the different reflections, has the same taste indifferently of the type of reflection that appears in it—so that in it all reflections have the same taste.

How can we come to discover this single taste by means of the practice of the two stages of generation and completion, for example in *Anuttarayogatantra*? Imagine that on the basis of the clarity of primordial awareness we transform ourselves into a deity and transform the universe into a *mandala*; if instead of continuously feeling that we are the

ⁱ *Ro-gcig*.

ⁱⁱ *brTul zhugs*.

deity and that our dimension is the *mandala*, at some point we discover the underlying unalterable nondual awareness, transformation becomes *Mahamudra* and thus we attain the highest realization of *Anuttarayogatantra*.⁴⁶³ Merely feeling that we are the deity and that all that surrounds us is the pure dimension of the *mandala* is nothing but a conditioned and made, thought-tinged experience pertaining to *samsara*; contrariwise, the unalterable nondual awareness that unveils in the realization of *Mahamudra* is the unproduced, unconditioned Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*, and its nondual unveiling is the unproduced, unconditioned realization of *nirvana*.

In the inner Tantras (for example, in *Anuyogatantra*) males take the precept not to ejaculate, except for seven especially prescribed purposes, which include reproduction in order to engender a son or daughter for the transmission of the teaching, medical reasons, and the requirements of the transmission of the teaching and of the means of purification by disciples of the *samaya* or commitment in connection with this transmission. As we have seen, insofar as dreams are manifestations of the level of energy,⁴⁶⁴ and insofar as ejaculation during sleep also results in the loss of the ejaculatory variety of the seed-essence (*bindu* or thigle),⁴⁶⁵ those who practice these Tantras must maintain this precept even during sleep. In their turn, females must stop menstruating altogether, and allow the return of menstruation only when they intend to engender a son or daughter for the transmission of the teaching, when they need to produce some particular requirements of the transmission of the teaching and of the means for disciples to purify their *samaya* or commitment, or when they must carry out any of the other exceptional activities established in the original texts.⁴⁶⁶

If there is a contradiction between the duties imposed by one's Tantric *samaya* and those imposed by the *Sutrayana*, it is the principle of the "higher" vehicle that must be followed (just as in the case of a contradiction between the vows of the *Hinayana* and the principle of the *Mahayana* training, one had to break the former in order to conform to the latter): if in order to maintain the Tantric *samaya* one has to contravene a rule of a "lower" vehicle, one will be keeping both precepts, for "lower" precepts are contained in "higher" ones but not the other way around. Contrariwise, if one decides to break the "higher" precept in order to keep the "lower" rule, one will be breaking both the "higher" and the "lower" precept.

One could wonder on what grounds one should, for example, fail to help others as established by the principle of training of the *Mahayana*, if this were necessary for keeping a Tantric *samaya*. The reply is that in such a case the principle of compassion would not be violated insofar as one keeps the Tantric *samaya* in order to swiftly attain full realization, for one knows that only if one is fully realized one can help others in a truer sense (firstly, because then one has the power to give them a definitive rather than a provisional help; secondly, because one will have overcome the "law of inverted effect" or "reverse law" that causes one to do evil while trying to do good).

By means of transmission, besides introducing the much discussed sample of primordial gnosis or *peyi yeshe*, the Master teaches us how to transform ourselves and be in the pure dimension of the deity. Then, when we do the practice and find ourselves in the transformed dimension, we are fulfilling our *samaya* or commitment. However, this is not all, for one of the most important points of the commitment or Tantric *samaya* lies in the duty to maintain a pure perception of the Master and our fellow students, who are known as "*vajra* brothers and sisters." Our realization, but also to a certain degree the health and long life of the teacher, as well as the development of our fellow students, will depend on the

degree to which we succeed in maintaining this pure perception, and on our earnestness in purifying our *samaya* when we have not succeeded in maintaining it.

Precepts on the Path of Spontaneous liberation

As Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu remarked in *The Path of Spontaneous Liberation and our Total Plenitude and Perfection*, while on the Tantric Path there are ten essential principles, which are normally explained as the transformation into the deity and the application of *mantra*, *mudra*, *samadhi*, offerings, *samaya* and so on, in Dzogchen teaching there are the “ten nothingnesses” or “ten absences,” which are nothing but the negation of the ten essential principles of Tantrism. Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu states in this regard:ⁱ

The Tantras tied to the Path of transformation must necessarily be based on ten fundamental points, called the “ten natures of *Tantra*,” which constitute the main means of realization in that Path: view, conduct, *mandala*, initiation, commitment (*samaya*), capacity for spiritual action, *sadhana*, visualization, making offerings, and *mantra*...⁴⁶⁷ The *Kunche Gyälpo* (which is the essential *Tantra* of the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings) continuously refers to [a variety of these] ten aspects: view, commitment, capacity for spiritual action, *mandala*, initiation, Path, levels of realization, conduct, wisdom and spontaneous perfection. [However, it does so in order to negate them, as corresponds] to the principle of the “ten absences” (*med pa bcu*) characteristic of the deep understanding of Dzogchen:

1. There is no view on which one has to meditate.
2. There is no commitment or *samaya* one has to keep.
3. There is no capacity for spiritual action one has to seek.
4. There is no *mandala* one has to create.
5. There is no initiation one has to receive.
6. There is no Path one has to tread.
7. There are no levels of realization (bhumis or *sa*) one has to achieve through purification.
8. There is no conduct one has to adopt or abandon.
9. From the beginning, self-arisen wisdom has been free of obstacles.
10. Spontaneous perfection is beyond hope and fear.

Thus the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* negates the Tantric principle of *samaya*; however, it does not do so because in Dzogchen there is no *samaya*, but because the *samaya* of Dzogchen is very different from that of Tantrism. In particular, the *samaya* of Dzogchen requires us to be beyond judgment, in the condition that in the preceding section was compared to that of the mirror that does not discriminate among reflections but simply manifests them in its own condition of total completeness / plenitude and perfection—which contradicts the constraint to keep specific samayas such as those established by the Tantric teachings, which require that we be constantly judging in order to determine what acts we can carry out and what must be avoided, in order to check whether or not we are keeping our *samaya*, etc.

The above is the reason why, as Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu stated in *The Path of Spontaneous Liberation and our Total Plenitude and Perfection*, the principle of the *samaya* of *Ati Dzogpa* Chenpo is explained in terms of the “four mepaⁱⁱ” (four “absences” or four

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, pp. 67-68.

ⁱⁱ *Med-pa*.

“there isn’t”): (1) “there is no *samaya*,” (2) “uninterrupted nondual Presence;”⁴⁶⁸ (3) “single State;” and (4) “spontaneously perfect” or “lhundrub.”⁴⁶⁹ The first element is “mepa” or “there is no *samaya*” because, as we have just seen, keeping certain precepts necessarily involves the action of the mental observer that judges our conduct, which implies the subject-object duality and the delusory valuation of concepts and judgments, and therefore doing so would interrupt the state of rigpa that the other three principles of the *samaya* of *Ati* oblige us to keep. In fact, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has remarked that these last three may be summarized in the phrase “always in the nondual Presence of the single State of rigpa that is spontaneously manifest and spontaneously perfect (lhundrub).”

What was said above concerning Dzogchen, applies also to the formless *Mahamudra* teachings associated with the Tantras, which are closely related to those of the Dzogchen Semde. In fact, it was precisely for the above reasons that Tilopa told Naropa on the banks of the Ganges: “The supreme *samaya* is broken by thinking in terms of precepts:” by thinking in terms of precepts that compel us to abstain from some acts and to carry out others we introduce or maintain the subject-object duality and the delusory valuation of concepts and judgments that veil the state of rigpa that the *samaya* of this teachings compels us to maintain. Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu explains the four absences of the *samaya* of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo in slightly different terms while elucidating chapter forty-six of the *Kunche Gyälpo*.ⁱ

Dzogchen talks of four characteristic samayas: (1) mepa, or absence—all is empty from the beginning and there is nothing to confirm; (2) chälwaⁱⁱ, or omnipresence—this is clarity that manifests; (3) chikpuⁱⁱⁱ, or single—the state of the individual as pure, nondual Presence; (4) lhundrub, or spontaneously perfect. In short, this means that the state of rigpa of each individual is the center of the universe. The condition of each person is like the sun beyond the clouds. Even though at times the clouds obscure the sun so that we cannot see it, the quality of the sun always exists and never changes. That is why the state is said to be lhundrub, spontaneously perfect from the origin. A realized one may seem different from us, but the only difference is that he or she has overcome the obstacle of the clouds and lives where the sun shines. So, we must recognize and have these four samayas, whose gist is that as practitioners we should never get distracted (with respect to the nondual state of rigpa)—this is our only real commitment.

Thus lhundrub also means that our own rigpa and the whole of phenomena have always been spontaneously perfect and thus need not be perfected by means of the two stages of generation and completion; chikpu means that all is the single state of rigpa and that all phenomena must manifest in this state; chälwa means that this state has no center or periphery and, being a condition of Total Space-Time-Awareness, encompasses all the phenomena that manifest in the single state of rigpa; and mepa means that there are no specific precepts to keep because trying to do so would interrupt the state of rigpa.

Thus in Dzogchen to keep the *samaya* is nothing but to continue in the state of rigpa without ever becoming distracted, integrating all experiences in this state. If at some point we become distracted, this does not mean we ought to feel guilty for having broken the *samaya*; contrariwise, feeling guilty would be a further violation of *samaya* insofar as it

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 113.

ⁱⁱ *Phyal-ba*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *gCig-bu*.

would imply the delusory valuation-absolutization of a judgment. This is why this *samaya* may be said to be “guiltless:” it requires the dissolution of the mental observer that judges the individual’s conduct. Hence, Milarepa stated: “This *dharma* of Milarepa is such that one is not ashamed of oneself.” And one of the phrases in an extremely renowned dictum by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu goes “Noi non ci vergogniamo per niente” (we do not become ashamed for any reason whatsoever). The state of rigpa, which is compared to a mirror, being free from the subject-object duality (is) beyond value judgments that may approve or disapprove, and thus (is) without acceptance and rejection. However, this does not mean that we should allow ourselves to become distracted; as soon as we notice that we have become distracted we apply the instruction that will create the conditions for the coarse, subtle or super-subtle thoughts at the root of the distraction to liberate themselves spontaneously, so that we may instantly recover the nondual Presence corresponding to the state of rigpa or Truth.

Chögyäl Namkhai Norbuⁱ relates that once someone asked the famous Dzogchen Master, Yungtön Dorje Pelⁱⁱ, what his practice consisted of, and he replied with the negative “mepa” or “there isn’t.” Then his startled questioner asked again, “Then you don’t meditate?,” to which the Master replied, “And when am I ever distracted?” This is the essence of *samaya* in Dzogchen teaching: not to meditate or to practice something with the mind and yet never to be distracted, for one remains uninterruptedly in the spontaneous perfection of the single state of rigpa or Truth.

The fact that in Dzogchen *Atiyoga* the true teacher is the Vision or tawa aspect of the Path, and that the commitment consists in being beyond judgment and hence beyond thinking in terms of precepts, does not mean that when delusory valuation-absolutization interrupts the state of Contemplation there will be no commitment to keep concerning the Master and fellow practitioners.⁴⁷⁰ The relationship between the Master and the students lasts until final realization, and so in most cases it goes far beyond the grave. Likewise, the fact that different practitioners follow the same teaching and have the same Master, or that they do a practice together in the state of Contemplation, establishes a bond between them that lasts until final realization. This type of relationship is compared to that between people crossing a river in the same boat with the intention of reaching the other shore: if they damage the boat or start to fight with each other in the middle of the river, the boat may capsize, preventing all those that were on board from reaching the “other shore” consisting in *nirvana*. Those who intend to cross the river of existence in the boat of a certain Master are known as *vajra* brothers and sisters; they must collaborate with and respect each other, for if collaboration and respect are present, even though minor incidents may occur, major impediments will be avoided.

However, the fact that we are in the same boat with a respected Master and with our *vajra* brothers and sisters, especially when the Master is very highly regarded and his boat is associated with the teaching universally regarded as supreme (or at least regarded as such by us), involves the danger of using our belonging to the group that we regard as the most special, led by the most important Master, to enhance our sense of identity and swell our chests with pride. This is especially dangerous at the present time, when Tibetan Buddhism has become trendy and chic in Hollywood, pop culture and the transpersonal scene, and it

ⁱ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished.

ⁱⁱ *gYung-ston rDo-rje dPal*.

has become widely known that Dzogchen is the supreme teaching of this form of Buddhism. In such conditions, being a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism and in particular of Dzogchen may be taken as a status symbol, and the condition of “old practitioner” may confer an even higher sense of identity in the individual.

However, enhancing our sense of identity by means of the practice of Buddhism would imply using the teaching that may lead beyond *samsara* to temporarily ascend to higher samsaric realms, selfishly pushing down non-Buddhists and all that do not belong to our group. It would be pathetic for us to use Dzogchen to freely give way to the impulses that Buddhism and the Dzogchen teaching should allow us to overcome.

To conclude, it may be useful to reiterate that by keeping a higher precept we will be also keeping the lower ones, even if we exhibit behavior that the latter forbid. We have already seen that, if we break a *Hinayana* vow in order to follow the principle of the *Mahayana* training, we are neither breaking the former nor contravening the latter. We have also seen that, if we transgress vows of the Path of renunciation in order to keep the Tantric *samaya*, we will be keeping both this *samaya* and the precepts of the Path of renunciation, and not breaking either. Likewise, if we are Dzogchen practitioners, *so long* as we keep the supreme *samaya* of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo, no matter what Tantric *samayas* or precepts of the Path of renunciation we may break, there will be no transgression whatsoever. In fact, so long as we continue in the state of rigpa or Truth, selfishness will not manifest, nor will impulses arise that may give rise to harmful courses of behavior; on the contrary, nonreferential compassion will embrace everything. In such a condition, what purpose would vows, precepts or commitment serve?

The essence of vows is to help practitioners maintain the morality that derives from a strong wish to liberate oneself from *samsara*; its characteristic nature is to adopt a resolute conduct based on intention not to harm others. In *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo, vows are substituted by the continuity of the state of rigpa; however, when this state is interrupted, we must avoid manifesting selfish conduct, and to this end we must keep the presence or mindfulness of responsible awareness. Furthermore, when we are unable to keep the Dzogchen state of rigpa, we will have to keep the immediately lower precepts; when we cannot keep these, we must keep the immediately lower ones—and if we cannot keep any of the other sets of precepts or conform to any of the other principles, we will have to keep the vows of the *Hinayana* if we have them, or otherwise *at least* avoid the ten nonvirtuous actions and so on.⁴⁷¹ At any rate, if we are Dzogchen or Tantric practitioners, we will have under all circumstances to be extremely aware in order to avoid breaking our *samaya* with the *Vajra* Master and the *Vajra* brothers and sisters—and, if we break it, we must do as soon as possible whatever is necessary in order to restore it.

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- Tibetan Text 2: Vimalamitra (discovered as a terma [gter-ma] by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo ('*Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dBang po*) [1820-1892]), *kLong lnga'i yi ge dum bu gsum pa (Man ngag thams cad kyi rgyal po klong lnga'i yi ge dum bu gsum pa)*.
- Tibetan Text 3: *Sutra of the Nucleus of the Tathagata*. Tib., *De-bzhin gshegs-pa'i snying-po'i mdo*. Skt., *Tathagatagarbhasutra*. Tohoku University catalogue of the sDe-dge edition of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon (Ed. H. Ui et al., Sendai, 1934), 258. P. Pfandt, *Mahayana Texts Translated into Western Languages* (Köln: In Kommission bei E. J. Brill, 1983), 231.
- Tibetan Text 4: *Rong zom lta 'grel (Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba zhes bya ba'i 'grel pa)*, by Rong zom Pandita Chos kyi bZang po (1012-1088), in SNGA 'GYUR BKA' MA'I CHOS SDE, vol. 'a,; published by Si khron bod kyi rig gnas zhib 'jug khang. (Commentary to *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* by Padmasambhava.)
- Tibetan Text 5: *Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud*, transmitted by dGa' rab rdo rje, in RNYING MA'I RGYUD BCUN BDUN, vol. I, published by Sangs rgyas rDo rje, New Delhi 1973. (One of the seventeen principal Tantras of the Man ngag sde.)
- Tibetan Text 6: *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*, by Padmasambhava (VIII c.) A: in SNGA 'GYUR BKA' MA'I SCHOS SDE, vol. 'a, published by Si khron bod kyi rig gnas

- zhig 'jug khang; B: in GDAMS NGAG MDZOD, vol. Ka, published at Paro in Bhutan, 1979. (One of the rare texts of the oral tradition ascribed to Padmasambhava; translated in Dowman, *Flight of the Garuda*, Ithaca 1992; Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, Leiden 1988; Italian translation in Baroetto, *L'insegnamento esoterico di Padmasambhava*, Arcidosso 1990.)
- Tibetan Text 7: *Thar lam gsal sgron* (*Klong chen snying thig gi sngon 'gro'i khrid yig thar lam gsal byed sgron me zhes bya ba*), by A 'dzam 'Brug pa 'Gro 'dul dpa' bo rdo rje (1842-1934), published by bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal, Darjeeling 1974. (A text of explanations of the preliminary practices of the *Klong chen snying thig*.)
- Tibetan Text 8: *A Feast for the Erudite* (*Chöjung Khepai Gatön: chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*), by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa (*dPa'bo gtsug lag phreng ba*). Two editions of this text are the ones published by: (A) Mi-rigs dpe sKrun Khang, Peking, 1986; (B) Delhi Kharmapae Chödey Guialwae Sungrab Partun Khang, Delhi, 1980 (I-Tib 81-900485. SP 9, 1961).
- Tibetan Text 9: *sDe-gsum snying-po'i don-'grel gnas-lugs rin-po-che'i mdzod ces-'bya-'ba'i grel-pa*, by Longchen Rabjampa (*kLong-chen Rab-'byams-pa*).
- Tibetan Text 10: *Kun-mkhyen zhal-lug bdud-rtsi'i thigs-pa* (commentary to the *Gnas-lugs rdo-rje'i tshig-rkang*), by Jigme Lingpa (*'Jigs-med gLing-pa*).
- Tibetan Text 11: *Shes bya kun khyab* (*Shes bya kun la khyab pa'i gzhung lugs nyung ngu'i tshig gis rnam par 'grol ba legs bshad yongs 'du shes bya mtha' yas pa'i rgya mtsho zhes bya ba*), by Kong sprul Ngag dbang Yon tan rGya mtsho (1813-1899). A: published by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Beijing 1982. B: Shatapitaka Series, I-Tib 77-913514. Saraswati Vihar, New Delhi, 1970. (A work that encompasses the whole of Buddhist knowledge. Currently being translated into English, so far two volumes have been published: *Myriad Worlds*, Ithaca, Snow Lion, 1995 and *Buddhist Ethics*, Ithaca, Snow Lion, 1998.)
- Tibetan Text 12: *Theg mchog mdzod* (*Theg pa'i mchog rin po che'i mdzod ces bya ba*) by Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer (1308-1363), in MDZOD BDUN, vol. cae, published by rDo grub chen rin po che, Sikkim. (A text of explanations of rDzogs chen; one of the 'seven treasures' of Klong chen pa.)
- Tibetan Text 13: Sa skya pan di ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan: *sDom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i bstan bcos*, p. 104, 3. Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, Lhasa 1986.
- Tibetan Text 14: *kLong-chen Chos-'byung* (*Chos-'byung rin-po-che'i gter mdzod bstan pa gsal bar byed pa'i nyi 'od*), by rGyal-sras Thugs mchod rtsal (written in 1362), Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, Lhasa 1991. The author has been identified as Longchenpa by various scholars including Jigme Lingpa, but others remain in doubt as to the author's identity.
- Tibetan Text 15: *Bai ro 'dra 'bag* (*rJe btsun thams cad mkhyen pa bai to tsa na'i rnam thar 'dra 'bag chen mo*). Lhasa, 1976. Edition contained in *Bai ro rgyud 'bum*, vol. Ja, pp. 405-605, Leh 1971.
- Tibetan Text 16: Tantra Comprising the Supreme Path of the Method that Clearly Unveils Samantabhadra's Primordial Gnosis. *Kun-bzang Ye-shes gSal-bar sTon-pa'i Thabs-kyi Lam-mchog 'Dus-pa'i rGyud. rNying-ma'i rgyud-'bum: Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa*. Thimpu, Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, 1973, vol. 3, No. 46.

- Tibetan Text 17: Root Tantra of the Gathering of the Sugatas: *bDer-'dus rTsa-rgyud. rNying-ma'i rgyud-'bum: Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa*. Thimpu, Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, 1973, vol. 31, No. 375.
- Tibetan Text 18: *The Realization of Yoga (rNal 'byor grub pa'i lung)*: Sutra that Gathers All Intentions: (mDo) dgongs(-pa) 'dus(pa), sPyi mdo dgongs-pa 'dus-pa, or 'Dus-pa mdo, the Fundamental Anuyoga Scripture, in 75 chapters. *rNying-ma'i rgyud-'bum: Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapa*. Thimpu, Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, 1973, vol. 11, No. 160.
- Tibetan Text 19: *Guru Padma's Advice in the Form of Questions and Answers: Slob dpon pad ma'i zhal gdams zhus lan, gter ma* by Nyang Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192). A: In RIN CHEN GTER MDZOD, vol. i, published by Si khron bod kyi rig gnas zhib 'jug khang; B: in JO MO LA GDAMS PA'I CHOS SKOR (under the title: *sKyabs 'gro lam khyer gyi skor jo mo la gdams pa*), Paro 1983. (A text of explanations on various aspects of Buddhist practice. Some parts translated in Padmasambhava, *Dakini Teachings*, Boston 1990.)
- Tibetan Text 20: *Summary of the Wish-Fulfilling Treasure: Yid bzhin mdzod kyi grub mtha' bsdus pa* by 'Ju Mi Pham 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho (1846-1912), in *Yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod* by kLong-chen-pa, vol. wam, published by Dodrub Chen Rinpoche, Sikkim. (A text of explanations on the various Buddhist traditions on the basis of the *Yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod*, which is one of the Seven Treasures of kLong-chen-pa.
- Tibetan Text 21: *Nor bu's bang mdzod (sLob dpon chen po pad ma 'byung gnas kyis mdzad pa's man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba'i mchan 'grel nor bu'i bang mdzod ces bya ba)* by 'Ju Mi Pham 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho (1846-1912). (Commentary to the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* by Padmasambhava.)
- Tibetan Text 22: *Ngal-gso skor-gsum gyi spyi-don legs-bshad rgya-mtsho* by kLong-chen Rabs-'byam-pa. Published by Dodrub Chen Rinpoche.
- Tibetan Text 23: *Byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po (rDzogs pa chen po byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud)*, in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma'i chos sde*, vol. XVII-tsa, translated into Tibetan by Shri Singha and Vairotsana, published by Si kron bod kyi rig gnas zhib 'jug khang.
- Tibetan Text 24: *rGyud bu chung bcu gnyis (Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi rgyud bu chung bcu gnyis)*, *snyan rgyud* written down by sNang bzher lod po (VII c.), published by Lokesh Chandra, International Academy of Indian Culture, Delhi 1968. (One of the fundamental texts of the *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud*.)

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- ¹ This most important Master from the region of Nub (*gNubs*) was a direct disciple of Padmasambhava; it has been asserted that he also studied with *Atiyana*-Dzogchen and *Mahayoga* Master Humkara (*Hum-ka-ra*), Humdze (*Hum-mdzad*) or Humchen Kara (*Hum-chen ka-ra*).
- ² This work was hidden as a *terma* (*gter-ma*) or spiritual treasure, and was revealed by tertön (*gter-ston*) or “Treasure revealer” Örgyen Lingpa (*O-rgyan gLing-pa*) of Yarge (*Yar-rje*) in the Sixteenth Century AD. Its authenticity and antiquity is proven beyond any possible doubt by the fact that there are exact quotes of it in Nubchen Sangye Yeshe’s *Samten Migdrön* (*bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*), which was buried in the ruins of the monasteries of Tun-huang from the beginning of the Second Millennium AD until the beginning of the 20th century AD, and thus we can be certain that it was not tampered with by anyone.
- ³ Some of the most important works dealing with the history of Buddhism in Tibet assert that Nubchen Sangye Yeshe was a direct disciple of Padmasambhava (for an example, cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, pp. 607-14, where it is asserted that, besides having been a direct disciple of Padmasambhava, Nubchen Sangye Yeshe may also have been a direct disciple of Shri Simha, Vimalamitra, Kamalashila, Dhanadhala, Tshaktung Nagpo, Shantigarbha, Dhanasamskrita, Shakyadeva, Dhanarakshita, the Brahman Prakashalamkara, Dharmabodhi, Dharmaraja, Tsuglag Pelge, Vasudhara and Chetsenkye—as well as of the erudite translator Nak Jñanakumara and his eight principal disciples [and, among these, in particular Sogdian Pelgi Yeshe and Gyelwei Yönten]). However, according to other important works, Nubchen was not a direct disciple of the great Master of Oddiyana, and the latter’s lineage passed through a series of other links until reaching Nubchen. Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu, who as we have seen has propagated the classification of vehicles into Paths taught by both Namkhai Nyingpo and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe, has upheld the latter view.
- It is curious that the two Masters who have bequeathed to us the division of the Buddhist vehicles into Path of renunciation (corresponding to the *Sutrayana* and comprising the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana*), Path of transformation (corresponding to the *Vajrayana* or Tantrism), and Path of spontaneous liberation (corresponding to *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo), were both born in the Tibetan region of Nub (*gNubs*). However, despite this coincidence, Namkhai Nyingpo did *not* belong to the “lineage of Nub” established by Nubchen Sangye Yeshe, Khulung Yönten Gyatso (*Khu-lung-pa yon-tan rGya-mtsho*), Yeshe Gyatso (*Ye-shes rGya-mtsho*), Pema Wangyäl (*Pad-ma dBang-rgyal*) and a series of later successors of these (and whose origins go back, through Sogdian Pelgi Yeshe, Nak Jñanakumara, Yudra Nyingpo and Vairotsana, to Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava).
- ⁴ As stated in a preceding note, this book was entombed in the ruins of Tun-huang, where it remained from the eleventh or twelfth century CE until 1908, when French Sinologist Paul Pelliot explored the cave temples that a local farmer discovered accidentally at the turn of the twentieth century. Therefore, its authenticity is beyond question.
- ⁵ Neither the University of the Andes (Mérida, Venezuela), nor the Dzogchen Community of Venezuela, nor the author of this book, possesses a Library of Tibetan mss. Moreover, as I have already pointed out, during my years in Asia, I did not dedicate myself to the study of Tibetan texts, but to the practice of the teachings.
- ⁶ The four philosophical schools of the *Sutrayana* traditionally featured in Tibetan *curricula* are not considered in this book, for I dealt with them in some detail in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.
- ⁷ In Part Two of this book I discuss the reasons why the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* is the most effective of the three series of Dzogchen teachings. However, in order to proceed swiftly on the Path it is convenient to have a good knowledge of the three series, so that even if one focuses mainly on the practice of the Menngagde, one may apply them as required by circumstances.
- ⁸ The method I have followed in doing this is the one I have called “a meta-ontological hermeneutics.” For a lengthy discussion of this method, see Capriles, Elías, work in progress. A briefer, more superficial explanation of it, is provided in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..
- ⁹ This applies to my explanation of the reintegration of the subject with the object that takes place by means of the practice of Thögel (*thod-rgal*): (1) as corresponding to the disappearance of the illusion of there being a subject and an object; (2) as corresponding to the dissolution of the illusion of there being an internal dimension or jing (*dbyings*) and an external dimension; and (3) as resulting in the manifestation of the condition of jerme (*dbyer-med*) in the sense the teachings of the Dzogchen Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*; Skt., *Upadeshavarga*) give the term. It also applies to the form in which *samsara* manifests (and how one must reGnize what manifests) after the nyam (*nyams*) called heddewa (*had-de-ba*), and to

many other yogi-philosophical explanations that are found in the work. However, the discussion of the reGnition of the luminosity of chöjing (*chos-dbyings*) while one sleeps is based on works by Longchen Rabjampa (*kLong-chen Rab-'byams-pa*), rather than on my own experience.

¹⁰ Among the explanations I have inferred from relating my own general experience of Buddhist practice, and in particular of the Dzogchen Menngagde, with various Buddhist teachings, it is important to stress that of the illusory duality between the mental subject and the physical world as a result of the “delusory valuation-absolutization” of the directional threefold thought structure that gives rise to the illusion that the spurious mental subject (which is an appearance of the dang [*gdangs*] form of manifestation of energy) is a soul or a substantial and autonomous mind, inherently separate from the physical world, located in the “crossing point” of the four dimensions (the three of space, and time).

¹¹ These are two cycles of Treasures of termas (*gter-ma*): the first was revealed by Dudjom Lingpa (*bDud-'joms gLing-pa*: 1835-1904) and the second was revealed by Jigdräl Yeshe Dorje himself under the title “New Treasure of Dudjom” (Dudjom Tersar: *bDud-'joms gTer-gsar*).

¹² I am referring to Dudjom Rinpoche's *Richö labcha nyamlen martri go der jöpa drubpe chülen* (*Ri-chos bslab-bya nyams-len dmar-khrid go bder brjod-pa grub-pa'i bcud-len*), the official English translation of which is the one Matthieu Ricard carried out based on instructions received from Tulku Thöndup and Dungse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, and published in 1979 under the title *Extracting the Quintessence of Accomplishment* (Ogyan Kunsang Choekhorling, 54, Gandhi Road, Darjeeling, India). There is an earlier translation by Vajranatha (John Reynolds) published under the title *The Alchemy of Realization* (1978, Simhanada Publications, P.O. Box 906, Kathmandu, Nepal).

¹³ In Trungpa, Chögyam, 1972, there is an abridged and simplified translation of *The Lion's Roar*, which, however, is not suitable as a basis for practice. Tulku Thöndup produced a complete, literal translation into English (as yet unpublished), which does not read smoothly but which may provide a potential practitioner with a perfectly sound basis for practice; he is to be commended for this effort.

¹⁴ These personalized teachings consisted in a series of sessions. In each session, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche would give a series of instructions concerning *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* that later on I would have to apply on my own; then, in the following session and before receiving the next teaching, I had to report the results obtained.

Concerning transmissions, I received from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche: the Khandro Nyingthik, Yabshi (*mKha'-'gro sNying-thig, Ya-bzhi*) revealed by Longchen Rabjampa (*kLong-chen Rab-'byams-pa*); the Longchen Nyingthik (*Thugs-gter kLong-chen sNying-thig gzhung-rtsa-ba gsal-byed-dang bcas-pa*) revealed by Jigme Lingpa (*Jigs-med gling-pa*); the collection of termas revealed by Chöling Karwang Chime Dorje (*Chos-gling gar-dbang 'chi-med rdo-rje*), and the complete Rinchen Terdzö (*Rin-chen gTer-mdzod*): the great compilation of the most important termas of the Nyingmapa (*rNying-ma-pa*) or “Old School” completed in the 19th century by Jamgön Kongtrül (*'Jam-dgon sKong-sprul*) the Great and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (*'Jam-dbyang mKhyen-brtse dBang-po*).

¹⁵ Apart from the clarifications concerning Jigme Lingpa's *Lion's Roar* or *Sengge Ngaro* (*Seng-ge'i nga-ro*) referred to in the regular text, from Dodrub Chen Rinpoche I received the transmission of Jigme Lingpa's *Longchen Nyingthik* (*Thugs-gter kLong-chen sNying-thig gzhung-rtsa-ba gsal-byed-dang bcas-pa*), which I had received already from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and the *lung* of the Rinchen Terdzö (*Rin-chen gter-mdzod*)—the transmissions or wangkur (*dbang-bskur*; Skt., *abhisheka*) of which I was receiving at the time from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

¹⁶ From Chatral Rinpoche, I received the transmission for a recitation and visualization associated with Mañjushri sitting on a snow lion, as well as most useful practical advice.

¹⁷ Capriles, Elias (published in the present version in 1989), *The Source of Danger is Fear—Paradoxes of the Realm of Delusion and Instructions for the Practice of the Dzogchen Upadesha*. Mérida, Editorial Reflejos. Restricted circulation.

Though I failed to acknowledge this in the above book, Jigme Lingpa's discussion of tensions and meta-tensions in *The Lion's Roar* was one of the keys both to my practice and to the book that resulted from it.

¹⁸ The webpage in which this book was originally published is <http://www.eliascapriles.dzogchen.ru>, where it continues to be available; however, later on my University offered me another webpage for making available the whole of my works, which is <http://webdelprofesor.ula.ve/humanidades/elicap>, and so now it is available in this webpage as well.

¹⁹ Exceptions to this rule are the books by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu, which as we have seen are based on the ancient tradition that, under this Master's inspiration, I follow in this book.

²⁰ Elsewhere I have objected to Dr Guenther's translation of a series of terms: in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, I objected to his translation of the Sanskrit *dharmakaya* and its Tibetan equivalent, *chöku* (*chos-sku*); in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols. and elsewhere I objected to his translation of the Tibetan *zhi* (*gzhi*) and so on. In the case of *dharmakaya*, the original word has so many different acceptations according to the context in which it is used, that any translation of it will necessarily do away with all but one of its manifold meanings, and therefore will distort—or, at least, restrict—the sense of the passage in which the term is found. This is why the Tibetans who produced the ancient translations, who as a rule rendered the words in terms of their deeper meanings rather than in terms of their etymology, in this case kept faithful to the etymology of the Sanskrit word and coined the term *chöku* (*chos-sku*): *chö* (*chos*) was the literal translation of *dharma*, and *ku* (*sku*) was the literal translation of *kaya*. Unlike the Tibetans, Dr Guenther totally disregarded the etymology of the term he was translating, and, rather than finding a translation that conveyed at least one the deeper meanings of the word, in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, he used one that contradicts all possible meanings of the term. Paradoxically, in a note to the same book (p. 190, note 22), the author criticizes those who leave the term untranslated. He writes:

“...*chos-sku*. This term corresponds to (the) Sanskrit *dharmakaya*, which is either left untranslated or mistranslated by what I call the ‘literalist fallacy’. The Tibetan term *sku* indicates ‘existence’ in the sense of ‘Being’. It almost approximates the existentialist philosopher’s conception of ‘existence’ and ‘Being’ except that it does not share the latter’s subjectivism.”

What existentialist and existential philosophers called “existence” was what from a Buddhist standpoint we would have to call being-in-*samsara*, which they analyzed in phenomenological and existentialist or existential terms as thoroughly as they could. Therefore, unwillingly Dr Guenther is telling us that the Tibetan term *ku* (*sku*) refers to being-in-*samsara*, when the truth is the very opposite of this: it is applied to *nirvana* only, and as such is contrasted with *lū* (*lus*), which applies only in *samsara*. See the books mentioned above for a systematic, exhaustive explanation of the reasons why Dr Guenther’s position is wrong.

²¹ For some time I used the terms “reCognition,” “reCognize,” etc., which I wrote with a capital “C” so that they could be distinguished from the terms “recognition,” “recognize” and so on. However, this was far from ideal, insofar as “reCognition” (etc.) still contained the prefix “co,” which implies the co-emergent arising of a subject and an object, which does *not at all* take place in what I am calling reGnition (etc.). (The dualistic knowledge [*connaissance*] that is a function of the state of delusion involves the co-emergence [*co-naissance*] of subject and object: as Paul Claudel correctly noted in his *Traité de la Co-naissance au monde et de soi-même* [in Claudel, 1943], “*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l’objet*.” Contrariwise, in what I call “reGnition” the subject-object duality dissolves like feathers entering fire.) (Claudel was speaking of knowledge in the Biblical sense and of co-emergence in general rather than of the co-emergent arising of the mental subject and its objects, but his statement applies even better to the latter event. He claimed that birth *qua* co-naissance, like time, occurs in Being, and that it forms a couple with Time.)

The neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on are far from perfect, for the prefix “re” may convey the wrong idea that a new event called “Gnition” takes place each and every time that which I am calling “reGnition” manifests (just as, each and every time there is recognition, a new cognition takes place)—when in fact what takes place whenever there (is) reGnition (is) the unveiling of the primordial Gnosis that is the true nature of thought and of all mental phenomena, and which neither arises nor disappears. However, since all alternatives I considered were far more inadequate, I decided to use “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on. (These terms may be translated into Spanish as “reGnoscimiento,” “reGnoscer” and so on, and into other Latin languages by the corresponding constructions.)

The first time these terms appear in the book, I include the pertinent explanations once again.

²² The canon containing the Buddhism of the First Promulgation (*dharmachakra*), in which the *Hinayana* was taught, is written in the Pali language. It is the original texts of the *Mahayana* (taught in the Second and Third Promulgations) that are in Sanskrit. Some texts of the *Vajrayana* or Tantrism are also in Sanskrit, although many others are in the language of Oddiyana (to a certain extent similar to Sanskrit) or in Prakrits from Northern India. The original texts of Buddhist *Ati Dzogpa* Chenpo are in the language of Oddiyana.

- ²³ For example, the sound of the word *prajña* might have been more or less similar to “prajnya”, whereas the sound of *jñana* might have been somewhere between “nyana” and “jana”.
- ²⁴ The letter “a” before an “l” and an “n” was most often transcribed as “e”, but sometimes was transcribed as “ä” insofar as its sound may oscillate between that of an almost perfect “a” and that of a perfect “e” (according to the region of precedence of the person who pronounces it and according to the syllable). An “a” before an “s” was also transliterated as an “e”, which is how it sounds in *every* instance. In general, there are many inaccuracies in my phonetic system of Romanization.
- ²⁵ I am taking as the main hypothesis in this regard the one upheld in Bocchi, Gianluca and Mauro Ceruti, 1993. However, I am leaving ample room for concurrent hypotheses by Gimbutas, Jain, Gornung, Renfrew, Hodge, Danilenko, Diakonov, Gamkrelidze Ivanov, Hausler, Gimpera, Schmid, Bosch, Georgiev, Devoto, and Makkay. All of them agree that the Indo-Europeans did not originate, as the Brahmins of India claim and as Hitler wanted to believe, in the slopes of the Himalayas, but in areas far more to the West—though they disagree as to the exact location and boundaries of those areas. *All* serious scientific researchers have rejected the allegedly Indian or Himalayan origin of the so-called “Aryans.”
- ²⁶ According to the most important researchers of the civilization and religion of Zhang-Zhung, and in particular to both Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu and Lopön Tenzin Namdak (cf. Tenzin Namdak [Lopön], 1993, p. 144), in the Kingdom of Zhang-Zhung, which comprised a great deal of the Himalayas and the Hindu-Kush, the language belonged to the Tibeto-Burmese family, which includes present day Tibetan, some of the Bhutanese languages and present-day Burmese, and belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family. During the reign of some of its Kings, the capital of this Kingdom was the city of *Khyung-lung*, near Mount Kailash and the lake of Manasarovar, where the great Bönpo Master, *tönpa (ston-pa)* or Primordial Master (literally “Revealer”) Shenrab Miwoche, taught the Dzogchen tradition of the Zhang-zhung Nyengyü (*rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-brgyud*), probably around 1,800 BC (other accounts give us quite different dates, which will be reviewed in a subsequent note).
- ²⁷ The region of Mount Kailash, where Tibeto-Burmese Master Shenrab Miwoche taught the Dzogchen tradition of the Zhang-zhung Nyengyü around 1,800 BC (see the previous note), is precisely the place of emanation of Shivaism, which was the religion of the Dravidians. In fact, the Shaivas hold Mount Kailash to be the home of the god Shiva, and therefore many Indian Shaivas go there every year on pilgrimage. Furthermore, the king who protected Shenrab, Triwer Sergyi Charuchen (*Khri wer la rje gu lang gser gyi bya ru can*), is regarded as the first of the eighteen kings whose crown was ornamented with horns (cf. Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1996a, p. 21, n. 7). As noted in Daniélou, Alain, 1979, Spanish 1987, since the arising of the deities of nature and communion in the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic, the horns have been paradigmatic ornaments of such deities, including the god Shiva in India and its equivalents elsewhere, such as Dionysus in Greece, Osiris in Egypt and so on (in Paleolithic art, which did not depict anthropomorphic deities, but glorified the world as sacred, horned animals were ubiquitous throughout Eurasia; then, when anthropomorphic deities arose in the art of the Neolithic, the horns reappeared as ornaments of the divinity and/or of animals associated with it—such as the white bull Nandin associated with Shiva.)
- ²⁸ Today, it is known beyond any doubt that the ancestors of the “Aryans” or “Indo-Europeans” (the Kurgans, who apparently had settled in a strip of land that stretched from the north coast of the Black Sea in the eastern direction to a small part of the western coast of the Caspian Sea), before beginning their conquering expansion in multiple directions had been regular marauders of their neighbors. They progressively invaded and conquered almost all of Europe, a great deal of the Middle East (which they could not conquer in its entirety because they had to compete with other mighty invaders who were conquering the region: the Semites), and then India.
- In all of that very extensive region, previously to the Indo-European and Semitic invasions, there had prevailed an elevated culture and a nondual mystical tradition of Tantric and Dzogchen methodology that later on developed into a series of local spiritual traditions: in the case of the Tibeto-Burmese from the lower slopes and high plains of the Himalayas, into Bön; in the case of the Dravidians of India, into Shivaism; in the case of the Persians, into Zurvanism; in the case of the Minoic Cretans, into the Dionysian religion—and, according to Alain Daniélou, in the case of the Egyptians, into the cult of Osiris. It must be noted that, though it seems true that the pre-Aryan, pre-Semitic civilizations that later on were conquered by the Aryans and the Semites were relatively egalitarian, peaceful and unsexist, on the basis of the works by Marija Gimbutas (Gimbutas, Marija, 1989 and Spanish 1991) and others, authors such as Riane Eisler (Eisler, Riane, 1987) and Carol Christ (Christ, Carol, 1987; Christ, Carol, 1989) seem somehow to have

exaggerated these traits, overlooking the fact that those civilizations developed as a result of conquering previously existing peoples and cultures. For example, research has shown that the Dravidians were not one of the autochthonous peoples of India (for a discussion of this, see Capriles, Elías, 1998a): the former settled into the Indus valley at a relatively late date, and they probably came to dominate the area after conquering previously settled peoples. The Elamite and the Sumerians probably did likewise in their respective regions. Similarly, in Catal Hüyük James Mellaart (Mellaart, James, 1967; Mellaart, James, 1975) found evidence of the existence of a priestly class and an incipient social stratification, and reported the existence of primitive weapons such as sticks, spears, daggers, arches, arrows and so on. Therefore, though it is clear that there is a radical difference concerning social stratification and bellicosity between the Indo-Europeans and the Semites, on the one hand, and the peoples they conquered, on the other, this difference is one of degree only. (In Capriles, Elías, 1998a, I also discussed the theses by Professor Victor Mair, from Pennsylvania University, Californian anthropologist James Mallory, from The Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland, and archeologist Jeannine Davis-Kimball, director of the San Francisco Chapter of the Archeological Institute of America. These have stressed the anthropological traits of the Indo-European *Tocharians*, which remained in the bronze age until very late times, produced few weapons and attributed a high status to women, in order to "prove" that the original Indo-Europeans were not as bellicose, sexist, domineering and so on as they were pictured above. Davis-Kimball, in particular, asserts that the traits shown by the Tocharians demonstrate that the bellicose, androcentric character attributed to Indo-Europeans in some "popular works" is a myth. However, archeological remains of the Kurgans [proto-Indo-Europeans] in the fifth millenary BC show them to have been as described above. In his turn, Mallory states that Iranian groups pushed the Kurgans to the East from their habitat in the steppes North of the Black and Caspian seas, and as a result they ended up establishing themselves on the edges of the Taklimanan desert, on the Silk Route, in Central Asia—where they remained roughly until year 1.000 CE, when either they became extinct or were absorbed by the Uighurs of present day Xinjiang. However, this either shows that not all Indo-Europeans turned bellicose at the same time, or, more likely, that the Tocharians were pacified by the people of the region where they finally settled, who at an earlier stage were Bönpos belonging to the empire of Zhang-zhung and later on converted to Buddhism. At any rate, it is a fact that the anthropological and cultural characteristics of the different peoples cannot be reduced to a racial determinism: some human groups "fall" swifter than others, but this is not due to any inherent racial traits. In fact, recent research into the human genome has shown that no genetic differences whatsoever support racial differentiation; furthermore, presently it is widely admitted that the whole of humankind derives from the same source.)

The so-called "Aryans" suppressed the spiritual traditions proper to the lands they conquered, but later on these reappeared, apparently with greater impetus in India and Central Asia, in such a way that in India part of their lofty spirituality infiltrated the religion of the conquerors, and in some regions of Central Asia the latter converted to Buddhism, in which at some point there arose both Tantric and Dzogchen teachings.

However, the Indo-European conquerors were quite zealous in filtering away any elements of the old religion that could threaten their rule, including many of its most direct mystic methods; in particular, and to the extent that repression is inherent in the structure and function of domination, to a great extent they excluded the methods that used the energy associated with the erotic impulse as a means to reach transpersonal experiences. In the case of India, where the Indo-Europeans established the caste system as a means to maintain their privileges, they eliminated the Bacchanalia in which social stratification had been inadmissible. I treat this subject in detail in Capriles, Elías, work in progress. See also: (1) Durant, Will, Spanish, 1957. (2) Bocchi, Gianluca and Mauro Ceruti, 1993. (3) Daniélou, Alain, 1979, Spanish 1987. (4) Gimbutas, Marija, 1989. (5) Eisler, Riane, 1987. Etc.

In Capriles, Elías, 1998a and elsewhere I asserted that the doctrines of the rishis who compiled the *Upanishads* consisted of those elements of pre-Aryan spiritual doctrines and practices that had not yet been destroyed at their time, which had infiltrated the religion of the invaders who later on came to be known as Indo-Europeans, becoming associated, in the form of "secret doctrines," to the sacred books called *Veda*. This view radically contradicts the traditions of the Brahmins, who insist that nondual mysticism is an exclusive element of the Aryan (i.e., Indo-European) lore, which they claim was the main contribution of this people to the human race. However, it suffices to take a look at the Vedas to confirm that the most ancient of the four *Vedas* of the *Samhita* collection—the *Rigveda*—does not contain any elements of nondual mysticism, is mainly mythological in character, and conveys a creationist view (a god creates the world, though this god is not always the same one) that is clearly henotheist (it describes a

plurality of gods among whom one prevails, though the one who prevails is not always the same one). In fact, the contents of the *Rigveda* are typical of “fallen” humankind, have no reference to methods that may lead to the unveiling of the primordial condition, and express a hierarchical mythology that mirrors the structure of the divided, fragmented societies and psyche resulting from the “fall.” (By “fall” I am referring to the introduction of judgment, which, as reflected in the etymology of the German translation of the term—which is *Urteil*—gave rise to the “original partition” at the root of the illusion of ontological dualism and pluralism.)

It was only several centuries after the arrival of the Indo-European invaders that the assimilation of the traditions of the Dravidian and Tibeto-Burmese predecessors of the Aryans in India allowed for the inclusion in one of the *Vedas* of the *Samhita* collection of elements of both nondual mysticism and of different types of magic (including many of the deviations that typically arise in the context of the ancient traditions of nondual mysticism as the result of the degeneration of humankind). This happened in the *Atharvaveda*, which was the last one in the *Samhita* collection. However, it was in the *Upanishads* (and later on in the *Vedanta Sutra*, as well as in the different types of *Vedanta* that, under the inspiration of *Mahayana* Buddhist doctrines, arose out of the interpretations of this *Sutra* [Gaudapada’s *Mayavada* was influenced by Yogachara philosophy, while Shankaracharya’s *Advaita Vedanta* was very clearly influenced by Madhyamika philosophy]) that some elements of nondual mysticism manifested more clearly in Brahmanic traditions.

Of course, it was with the arising of Buddhism that the above elements acquired greater coherence, and it was only with the arising of Buddhist *Tantra* and Dzogchen that the anti-somatic elements typical of Indo-European conceptions were totally done away in spiritual systems in Aryan-dominated India. For example, according to the Dzogchen teachings, the body is a manifestation of tsel (*rtsal*) energy, which in its turn is **one of the three forms of manifestations of one of the three bodhichittas or wisdoms inherent in our true condition**; therefore, the body is a manifestation of wisdom and *bodhichitta* rather than an obstacle to wisdom and *bodhichitta*. And, in fact, in the methods of both *Tantra* and Dzogchen the body and its impulses may be used as the very Path to Awakening.

To conclude, it must be noted that recent research has unveiled the fact that the Chinese annals relate Tibetan nomad tribes (as different from non-nomadic Tibetans) with the Ch’iang, an ancient nomadic ethnic group that at some point had a warring presence on the North-Western confines of China and that according to the researchers who have unveiled this fact had Indo-European origins. Furthermore, they tell us that the Tibetan language and culture carry influences of the proto-Indo-Europeans as an effect of the nomads’ migrations (Pettorino, Sveva, 2003).

(The term antisomatism, coined by Mircea Eliade, refers to the idea that the body is evil or bad, or that the impulses associated to the body are evil or not to be trusted. However, antisomatism necessarily implies the illusory body-soul dualism, even when the latter is not asserted as an ontological tenet: in order to blame and despise the body, the mind must necessarily feel different from it, independently of the ontological conceptions that the anti-somatic individual may avow. Therefore, anti-somatic systems, even when they claim to be nondualistic, cannot be truly so.)

²⁹ I said their purest form and quintessence manifested in the teachings of Buddhist Dzogchen and the *Vajrayana*, independently of the lineal transmission of the ancient tradition, because in the absence of evidence showing there was a direct human link between these Buddhist teachings and the ancient tradition, we are compelled to assume that the Buddhists did **not** receive their Dzogchen and *Vajrayana* teachings from non-Buddhist sources. The thesis I am positing is that these Buddhist teachings expressed the essence of the original practices and doctrines of the peoples speaking Tibeto-Burmese and Dravidian languages more accurately than other teachings, for the quintessence of the latter must have been, as suggested in a previous note, Shenrab Miwoche’s Dzogchen tradition of the Zhang-zhung Nyengyü (*rdzogs-pa chen-po Zhang-zhung sNyan-brgyud*), assisted by the Tantric teachings of both Bönpos and Shaivas (for evidence as to the fact that the Bönpos had Mantric teachings see Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1996a.)

³⁰ The date of Shakyamuni’s *parinirvana* is often rounded to 480 BC “because of the general nature of the traditional chronology” (Napper, Betsy, 2003, p. 661, note 60). It must be noted that one system of astrological calculation places the *parinirvana* at 544 BC, whereas a tradition of the *Kalachakra Tantra* places it *circa* 880 BC.

³¹ Most individuals continue to believe that satisfaction, plenitude and fulfillment are possible in the normal state of mind pertaining to *samsara* precisely because there are riches, pleasures, luxuries and so on that

are beyond their reach, and so they can believe that upon reaching them they will obtain the satisfaction, plenitude and/or fulfillment that presently eludes them. Therefore all that Gautama Siddhartha's parents did to keep him from questioning human life may have had an effect opposite to the one they were trying to produce, as the prince quickly got bored of all that humans desire most, learning that it cannot produce plenitude or satisfaction—which caused him to undertake the spiritual quest they were intent on preventing. In short, his parents were victims of the “reverse law” or “law of inverted effort” that will be considered in a subsequent chapter of Part One of this book.

- ³² The most ancient forms of Buddhism deny the existence of something independent and permanent that may be designated as the “self,” inside or outside the “physical” and “psychic” existence of the individual. After the development of *Vedanta*, some branches of which distinguished very clearly between *jivatman* or individual soul or self and *paratman* or universal soul or self, Buddhists specifically rejected the concept of a universal soul or *paratman* also. The *Upanishads* had posited a permanent substance called *brahman* (which later on *Advaita Vedanta* explained to be one with *paratman*), which they compared to clay and which in their view adopts multiple transitory forms, and claimed then we wrongly perceive that substance as a multiplicity of permanent substances, but that there is no such multiplicity, for the forms we perceive as permanent substances are like the different utensils that are made from the same clay. The Buddhism based on the First Promulgation negated the existence of such a permanent substance and asserted that the multiple transitory forms we perceive arise and disappear at each instant without there being any substantial basis for them (i.e., without there being a substantial “clay”). In the *Mahayana*, it is asserted that entities are all *tathata* (mainly the texts of the First Promulgation and the philosophical schools based on them) or *dharmata* (mainly some texts of the Second Promulgation and the philosophical schools based on them); however, the *Madhyamaka* School denies in extremely clear terms that the basic constituent of entities is not a substance. (It is clear that the Buddhist remedy against eternalism could then become the poison of nihilism: this is why Buddhism developed a series of arguments in order to prevent clinging to nihilist conceptions, which it declared far more dangerous than clinging to eternalistic ones: in particular, this is why the *Madhyamaka* school developed the concept of an “emptiness of emptiness.” See Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)
- ³³ Hence the Buddhist doctrine of constant, uninterrupted change, aimed at neutralizing the belief in a substance and therefore the possibility that by dualistically, conceptually knowing a pseudo-totality as object, and dualistically, conceptually identifying with this pseudo-totality (or, in Sartrean terms, *becoming* this pseudo-totality by establishing a *link of being* with it), the individual may wrongly believe that he or she is having direct realization of the absolute truth, and as a result may cling to the absorptions of the formless realms and in particular of the peak of existence in the belief that he or she has attained Awakening or *nirvana*—which was precisely the distortion in which his teachers incurred and that he rejected.
- ³⁴ This Third Truth is often stated as “stopping the causes (which are the karmas), the effects cease.” In particular, according to the *Theravada*, *nirvana* is the only unconditioned and unmade (*asamskrita*) *dharmata*.
- It is a mistake to believe that the *Theravada* conceives *nirvana* as a mere annihilation, or, furthermore, as the extinction of human life—which is how Albert Schweitzer interpreted it, as a result of which he classified Buddhism as a “life denying” religion. Many texts illustrate *nirvana* with the image of a flame that seems to go out, but which in reality, rather than being annihilated, through entering pure space (*akasha*) disappears from view. Therefore, *nirvana*, which is not simply nonbeing (it is qualified as not nonbeing), would be the transition to a different dimension. For example, *Hinayana* Buddhism postulates two types of *nirvana*: *nirvana* with a residue of condition, called *sopadhishesha nirvana*, which is obtained during one's lifetime, and *nirvana* without a residue of condition or *nirupadhishesha nirvana*, which is obtained posthumously. The former is the transition to another dimension, not in the sense of going beyond our world, but of continuing to live and yet experiencing the world (so to say, for the concept of experience does not apply here) in a totally new way, utterly beyond *duhkha* and its cause, which is the basic human delusion.
- ³⁵ Literally, the term *dharmachakra* means “(turning) the wheel of the teaching:” in ancient India, the introduction of a true system of spiritual teachings was illustrated by the image of setting in motion the wheel of the teaching or *dharmachakra*. The individual who did so was called a *Chakravartin*—a term that was also applied to emperors who would conquer the whole of all known inhabitable territories.

- ³⁶ The *Theravada* was not one of the original Eighteen Schools of Buddhism that adhered to the First Promulgation (i.e., of the type of Buddhism that later on the *Mahayana* referred to as “*Hinayana*”). In fact, the *Theravada* developed within the *Mahasthavira* School (one of the first four to arise in the Buddhism adhering to the First Promulgation), having been founded as an independent school by Moggaliputta Tissa in the “Council of the Pali School” that this monk organized by order of King Ashoka and which convened around 244 BC (though the Pali School refers to this as the IIIrd Council and, making no reference whatsoever to the Council wherein there took place the division between Mahasanghikas and Sthaviras, says that this division was a consequence of the IId Council, in fact the council in which the schism took place was the IIIrd). The Council summoned by Moggaliputta Tissa excluded the monks opposed to the latter’s theses, which this monk refuted in his *Kathavatthu*—which subsequently was incorporated to the *Abhidharma* of the *Theravada*. In Ceylon, the new doctrine was adopted by the monks who adhered to the *Mahaviharavada* (which was a subdivision of the *Mahasthavira* School). Later on, the *Theravada* divided into *Mahishasaka* (from which the *Dharmaguptaka* were derived) and *Kashyapiya*.
- ³⁷ This book, still unpublished as I write this English version of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, was intended to be an Appendix to it. However, then I realized it would make the present book too long, and finally in an email Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu referred to it as “your new book”—which caused me to decide that the right thing to do was to turn it into a separate book. Henceforth it will be referred to as *Capriles, Elías*, electronic publication 2004.
- ³⁸ The root of this term (*khora*) literally means “wheel.”
- ³⁹ Thus, not only the *Theravada* is not included among the eighteen original schools of Buddhism based on the First Promulgation; the *Vaibhashika* and the *Sautrantika* are also not included among them. However, all Tibetans admit them as schools and discuss them, and the same does a non-Tibetan twentieth century scholar of Ancient Indian Philosophy such as S. Radhakrishnan (who, as will be asserted below in the regular text of this book, does not list the *Theravada* as a school). See Radhakrishnan, S., 1923/1929.
- ⁴⁰ As stated in a previous note, though the Pali School refers to this as the IIIrd Council and, making no reference whatsoever to the Council wherein there took place the division between Mahasanghikas and Sthaviras, claims that this division was a consequence of the second Council, in fact the council in which the schism took place was the third.
- ⁴¹ Note 113 by Adriano Clemente to Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, 1999/2001 reads:
- “The aggregate of form (*rupa*) comprises four ‘forms’ as cause (the four elements [which are] earth, water, fire and air) and eleven ‘forms’ as effect (the five sense faculties, the five sense objects, and what is known as ‘imperceptible form’ ...)
- “The aggregate of sensation (*vedana*) consists of three types of sensation: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.
- “The aggregate of recognition (*samjñā*) basically comprises perceptions derived from contact with the six sense objects; however, its particular feature is to distinguish the characteristics of objects (e.g., color), which can embrace all three realms, [which are that] of passion, [that] of form and [that of formlessness].
- “The aggregate of mental formations (*samskara*) is responsible for actions and contains fifty-one virtuous and non-virtuous states associated with the active function of the mind and twenty-four formations dissociated from the active function of the mind (*ldan min ’du byed*), such as a newly acquired virtuous quality or a temporary state of ‘cessation’ (*nirodha*) in which one remains absorbed in a condition devoid of perception.
- “The aggregate of consciousness (*viññāna*)... [which corresponds to the awareness of objects] comprises the six consciousnesses (the five sense consciousnesses plus the mental consciousness) or eight consciousnesses (in the case of those texts of the Third Promulgation that add to these six: [1] the consciousness contaminated by the passions, and [2] the base consciousness).”
- It must be noted that the illusion of self, generated by the interaction of the skandhas, implies the illusion of other. Furthermore, as soon as one becomes a separate mortal self who is liable to suffer, one is beset by fear of whatever may happen to oneself, and of whatever one’s actions may bring upon oneself. Sakya Pandita exemplified both these facts with the example of a bird supposedly existing in the vicinity of Tibet that is terrorized by the sound of its own wings, which makes it believe someone else is approaching. In his turn, Tibetan Master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche spoke of “an ego and its attendant paranoia.”
- ⁴² As will be shown in a subsequent chapter of Part One of this book, the *Hinayana* considers the ten nonvirtuous actions to be always nonvirtuous and thus as having to be avoided by all means under all circumstances. However, according to the *Mahayana* it is legitimate and mandatory to commit any of the seven nonvirtuous actions concerning the body and the voice (or speech) if this is done for the benefit of

sentient being and the individual is certain that the result will be positive. Only the three nonvirtuous actions concerning the mind are always nonvirtuous and should be avoided by all means and under all circumstances, for they can never be useful to sentient beings, and are always harmful to the individual who commits them.

⁴³ For the *Hinayana*, although there was no ego and no soul, there was a succession of conscious moments that existed in an absolute manner, and innumerable absolutely real atoms that formed material objects. All *Mahayana* schools denied the inherent or substantial existence of atoms; as I have shown in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, the *Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Sautrantika* was the only philosophical school of the *Mahayana* to posit the existence of atoms, but stressed the fact that such atoms did not exist inherently or substantially. In turn, on the basis of the concept of “conscious instants,” the *Yogachara* School posited a *santana*, *semgyü* (*sems-rgyud*) or “mental current” consisting in the uninterrupted succession of such instants.

⁴⁴ The Madhyamaka subschools divided both the selflessness (Skt., *nairatmya*; Tib., *dagme* [*bdag-med*]) or emptiness of self-being (Skt. *swabhava shunyata*; Tib. *rangzhinggyi tongpanyi* [*rang bzhing gyis stong pa nyid*]) of human beings and the absence of an independent self-nature (Skt., *nairatmya*; Tib., *dagme*) or emptiness of phenomena that are not human beings into a coarse one and a subtle one. In the case of the selflessness or voidness of human beings, the coarse one consists in the baselessness of the belief in a pure ego or in a center that would be different from the events it unites: it consists in the unfounded character of the belief in a truly existing, self-sufficient self conceived as a non-composite phenomenon that would exist independently from the aggregates (Skt., *skandha*; Tib., *phungpo* [*phung-po*]). In turn, the subtle selflessness of human beings is the baselessness of the belief in a pure ego or center as an event of a “self-sufficient substance:” it consists in the unfounded character of the belief in a truly existing, self-sufficient self conceived as a composite phenomenon corresponding to the collection of aggregates. Only the five Sammitiya sub-schools of the Vaibhashika School ever held the subtle belief in an ego; no Buddhist school ever held the belief in a coarse one.

The division into a “coarse” and a “subtle” belief in the true existence of phenomena that are not human beings, and the proclamation of two types of absence of an independent self-nature or voidness of phenomena that are not human beings, corresponding to the baselessness of these two beliefs, is exclusive to the Madhyamikas. Since the *Hinayana* proclaims the selflessness of human beings but not that of the phenomena that are not human beings, no *Hinayana* school ever posited either of these two types of absence of an independent self-nature or voidness. Since the Yogacharas belonged to the *Mahayana*, they posited the selflessness or voidness of phenomena; however, although this system arose after that of the Madhyamikas, their conception of the absence of an independent self-nature and their conception of voidness were limited to what the Madhyamaka called “coarse voidness of phenomena other than human beings,” which this school defined as the baselessness of the belief that things exist apart from their being experienced: it understood emptiness merely in the sense of the nonexistence of phenomena *as separate from mind*, and failed to add that, as they are experienced, phenomena do not exist in the way in which we erroneously experience them as existing (i.e., that they do not exist inherently, absolutely and self-sufficiently). Therefore only the Madhyamikas posited the subtle voidness of phenomena other than human beings that corresponds to the baselessness of the subtle exaggerate belief in the existence of things and that consists in the fact that as they are being experienced things lack the self-existence, absolutely true existence, or inherent existence that we experience them as having.

⁴⁵ Several of these sutras are listed, and some quoted, in the section on the Sudden *Mahayana* in a subsequent chapter of this book.

⁴⁶ See the section on the Sudden *Mahayana* in a subsequent chapter of this book, and the notes to that section.

⁴⁷ “This shore” corresponds to the experience marked by the basic delusion that characterizes “sentient beings;” the “other shore” corresponds to the “Awake” state that characterizes Buddhas or “Awake Ones.” These concepts will be explained in further detail later on in this Part One of this work.

⁴⁸ The Japanese render the term *shunyata* as *ku*, but translate the Taoist and *Ch’an* concept of *wu* as *mu*.

⁴⁹ The *naga* are spirits of nature which, according to the Tibeto-Burmese mythology assimilated by the Dravidians of ancient India (and later on by the Aryan invaders also), lived in water and in the subterranean world, whose bodies have a human form from the waist up and a serpent-like form from the waist down. It is said that Shakyamuni left the *Prajñāparamita* teachings under the custody of the king of the *naga*. When the latter became ill, only Nagarjuna could cure him. Understanding that Nagarjuna was the human prophesied by Shakyamuni as the one to whom he should hand over the *Prajñāparamita*

teachings, the king of the *naga* carried out his commission. Thus Nagarjuna disseminated them in the human world and, furthermore, wrote the series of commentaries on them that make up the doctrinal base of the *Madhyamaka* (“middle Way” or “middle Path”) School of *Mahayana* Buddhism.

- ⁵⁰ According to Tibetan tradition Nagarjuna lived for 600 years beginning 400 years after Shakyamuni’s *parinirvana* or physical death; if we assume the founder of Buddhism lived from 560 BC through 480 DC, then this tradition may be read as asserting Nagarjuna lived from 80 BC to 520 CE. Other sources give as the date of Nagarjuna’s birth 482 BC, and still others 212 BC. For an account of the various views with regard to Nagarjuna’s dating, considering those of Western scholars also, see Ruegg, David Seyfort, 1981, pp. 4-6.

At any rate, it is important to take into account the fact that, according to Tibetan Text 8, from Garab Dorje, the first Master of Buddhist Dzogchen, there were two lines of succession, and Nagarjuna was a link in one of them. Since the most widely admitted date of Garab Dorje’s birth is 55 CE, in order to be a link in one of the succession lines deriving from him Nagarjuna must have been alive after the said date.

It must also be noted that Tibetans tend to identify the Nagarjuna who founded the *Madhyamaka* School with the Tantric Master of the same name, who according to all extant records was a disciple of the *mahasiddha* Sarahapada and who most probably lived around the eighth century CE. If the Tibetan chronology for Nagarjuna’s birth were right, this would imply that Nagarjuna lived for much longer than the 600 years attributed him by Tibetan tradition.

- ⁵¹ The Uma (*Madhyamaka*) Rangtongpa (*dbU-ma rang-stong-pa*), based on Nagarjuna’s *Collection of Madhyamika Reasonings*, groups those Madhyamikas who understand emptiness in the sense of the absence of inherent existence of entities, and includes the two great Indian sub-schools, which are *Prasangika* and *Swatantrika*. The term Uma Rangtongpa is defined by contrast with the term Uma Zhentongpa (*dbU-ma gzhan-stong-pa*), which refers to the understanding of emptiness as referring to the *dharmakaya* and the assertion of the nonexistence of anything extraneous to it, etc. For a brief discussion of the various sub-schools of *Madhyamaka* see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

It must be remarked, however, that in his *Collection of Eulogies* (Skt., *Stavakaya*; Tib., *bsTod-tshogs*) and in particular in the *Eulogy to the Expanse of the True Condition* (Skt., *Dharmadhatustava*; Tib., *Chos-dbyings bstod-pa*), Nagarjuna expressed views that correspond to those of the Uma Zhentongpas. The *Madhyamaka* subschool known as Mahamadhyamaka encompasses and harmonizes the views of the Uma Rangtongpa and the Uma Zhentongpa.

- ⁵² The term “phenomenon” is derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, meaning, “that which appears.” Some translators use the term only with regard to objects, for they are conditioned by common sense, Jude-Christian religions or Western metaphysics (or even a phenomenological philosophy such as Husserl’s), according to which what appears are the objects, which appear to the subject—which in its turn is deemed not to be an appearance. However, according to the higher forms of Buddhism and to the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, among other systems, the mental subject and the dualistic consciousness associated with it are mere appearances that have their existence only insofar and so long as they appear (according to *Mahamadhyamaka*, Dzogchen and Sartre’s philosophy, they manifest in a basic nondual awareness). In fact, in the Introduction to Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943; 31st edition, 1980, the author rejects Husserl’s subtle assertion of the Cartesian *cogito*, and notes that:

“Consciousness is not to any extent substantial; it is a mere ‘appearance,’ in the sense that it only exists to the extent that it appears.”

Bhavaviveka, who developed the initial form of *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika* philosophy, was the first Buddhist thinker to insist that consciousness was part of the phenomenal world, and to substantiate this view with a plethora of arguments. In fact, consciousness and the mental subject, which manifest only in *samsara* when the subject-object duality is functioning, are phenomena also, even though they do not appear directly and explicitly as objects, but in a much more subtle way, which in the case of the mental subject has been referred to as “indirect and implicit.”

- ⁵³ It may be said that *all* texts, whether they may be correctly said to have a provisional meaning or a definitive meaning, have a provisional meaning in comparison to the primordial gnosis that becomes patent upon Awakening. In this sense, all expressions in terms of words have a provisional meaning, and only the state of rigpa (*rig-pa*), inexpressible in words and incomprehensible in terms of concepts, has a truly definitive meaning.

- ⁵⁴ Shakyamuni himself prophesized (Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 189):

“A monk who is called Asanga, learned in the meaning of these treatises, will differentiate in many categories the sutras of provisional and definitive meaning.”

Concerning the principally “inner” or “outer” character of the teachings contained in sutras of the Third Promulgation, definitively the more “inner” ones are those that teach that all that manifests or appears, either as subject or as object, is based on primordial gnosis (Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *yeshe* [*ye-shes*]) rather than on mind, and that emphasize the fact that consciousness is a conditioned, delusive, impermanent appearance that disappears upon Awakening. Furthermore, the *Lankavatara*sutra posits the possibility of an instantaneous Awakening and in general its tenets and way of exposition are of the innermost kind, as are also those of the *Avatamsakasutra*, and so on. Conversely, as explained in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, the *Sandhinirmochana* concentrates on the gradual Path and teaches a way to meditate on emptiness that give rise to a conceptual type of voidness based on the subject-object duality (at least at the level of *vipashyana* or *lhantong* based on analysis). Thus it could be ventured that the *Lankavatara* (as well as the *Avatamsaka* and several others) is more “inner” than the *Sandhinirmochana*.

The Commentaries and secondary literature by the commentators of the Third Promulgation (and the same applies, obviously, to those of the Second) may also be classified into texts having a more “inner” meaning and writings having a more “outer” meaning. In particular, in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, I listed many of the commentaries and treatises by Maitreyanatha, Asanga and others that belong to the innermost type.

Concerning the “many categories” into which Asanga would differentiate the commentaries and original treatises, Dudjom Rinpoche (*ibidem*) lists the following characteristics as the criterion for such differentiation: (1) the standard of their composition; (2) the purpose of their composition; (3) their individual composers; (4) the manner of their composition; (5) the transmitted precepts that they explain; and (6) the meaning that they express. In their turn, (6) are classified into: (A) those that teach quantitatively (in their turn classified into common and uncommon), (B) those that teach qualitatively (exemplified by those of the *Madhyamaka* that emphatically establish both the coarse and the subtle selflessness of both human beings and phenomena that are not human beings), and (C) those that teach the means for attaining liberation and omniscience (classified according to whether the author was of the superior type, like Nagarjuna and Asanga, of the middle type, like Dignaga and Chandragomin, or of the lower type, like Shrigupta or Shakyamati).

For an explanation of the different categories of treatises considered in the first three paragraphs of this note, see Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, pp. 88-109.

⁵⁵ Tradition has it that it was Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, who inspired Asanga after the latter did intense devotional practice having Maitreya as its object; however, nowadays all Western scholars and many Tibetan Masters agree that the one who inspired Asanga was the philosopher and Buddhist teacher, Maitreyanatha.

⁵⁶ Tradition has it that Vasubandhu (author of *Sarvastivadin* texts such as the famous *Abhidharmakosha*, of *Yogachara* texts like the *Vimśatikā*, of the poetic work *Trimśhikā* and of various commentaries) had been a *Hinayana* teacher until his conversion to the *Mahayana* (particularly to the *Yogachara* School) by influence of his brother, Asanga. Erich Frauwallner has proposed the alternative theory according to which the Vasubandhu who was the author of *Yogachara* texts and brother of Asanga (who, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng* [Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969], was the twenty-first link in the transmission of *Ch’an* or *Zen*) lived in the fourth century CE, but the Vasubandhu who was the author of *Sarvastivadin* texts was another individual, who flourished in the fifth century. However, this alternative theory has not been well received by present day scholarship. (According to Tibetan chronology, Asanga was born approximately on 420 CE; if this were the correct chronology, both Asanga and his brother Vasubandhu would have lived in the Fifth Century CE.)

⁵⁷ This name alludes to the group of treatises constituted by Nagarjuna’s *Madhyamakakarika* and *Dwādashadwarashastra*, and Aryadeva’s *Shatashastra*. It must be noted that the major works of both Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were translated into Chinese, but none of the works by Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti were translated into this language. Among those by Bhavya, only the *Prajñāpradīpa* (Tib., *Shes-rab sgron-me*) was rendered into Chinese. Cf. Robinson, Richard, 1967, pp. 26-39.

⁵⁸ The importance of this school diminished as a result of the introduction of the *Fa-hsiang* school.

⁵⁹ Allegedly, because of its doctrine according to which the *icchantika* could never become a Buddha.

⁶⁰ Takakuso, Junijiro, Edited by Wing-tsit Chan and Charles A. Moore, 1947, is largely based on the *Hasshu-kōyō*, meaning “A Summary of the Eight Sects,” which is quite well-known in traditional Japanese Buddhist

scholarly circles. Recent scholarship disagrees with its views on a number of details. (Special thanks are due to Edgar M. Cooke for his help with the publishing data and other information concerning this book, which I lost upon returning West from Nepal in 1983.)

In India the Ch'an or Zen school of the sudden *Mahayana* was called the Dhyana School (its Chinese and Japanese names being the translations of the Sanskrit term *dhyana* into these languages).

⁶¹ In contrast to the Indian *Tripitaka*, which contained only the teachings reputed to have originated directly from the Buddha Shakyamuni in his *nirmanakaya* form, the Chinese *Tripitaka* also contains the *shastra* or commentaries written by the great Chinese Masters.

In their turn, Tibetans distinguish between (1) the Kangyur (*bka'-gyur*), containing, on the one hand, the texts of the Three Baskets (*Tripitaka*) attributed directly to the teachings of the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni, and on the other hand, the root Tantras, and (2) the Tengyur (*bsTan-gyur*), which contains the whole of the commentaries by the great Indian Masters extant in Tibetan.

⁶² In particular, Takakuso, Junijiro, Edited by: Wing-tsit Chan and Charles A. Moore, 1947, which as we have seen is largely based on the *Hasshu-koyo*, meaning "A Summary of the Eight Sects," considers the respective scions of the Indian Madhyamaka and Yogachara Schools to be quasi-*Mahayana*, and yet classifies the Vinaya School as a fully-fledged *Mahayana* tradition. This is clearly a flaw of Takakuso's text and of the traditional views it conveys.

⁶³ For this reason, many Chinese *Mahayana* Masters consider it to be heterodox—just as, owing to its presentation of the Awakening principle in terms that in their view seemed to identify it with an eternal and substantial self, many Tibetan Masters (especially within the Gelugpa [*dge-lugs-pa*] school) considered the Jonangpa (*Jo-nang-pa*) school of Buddhism that developed in their country to be heretical.

⁶⁴ Tib., *dö chenpo* ('*dod chen po*), meaning "great desire."

⁶⁵ The Sanskrit term *shamatha* (Pali, *samatha*; Tib., *zhine* [*zhi-gnas*]; Chinese *chih*) refers to different types of mental pacification practice that in the long run may lead all movements of the mind to stop—even though generally this is not their ultimate aim. The Sanskrit term *vipashyana* (Pali, *vipassana*; Tib., *lhantong* [*lhag-mthong*]; Chinese, *kuan*) refers to different types of practice dealing with the movements of the mind and with insight (which, among many other things, may be related to the discovery of the emptiness of thought, with the use of thought as a means to discover the emptiness of entities, with questioning one's experience in order to overcome dualism, etc.).

⁶⁶ Furthermore, in Suzuki, D. T., French 1940/1943, 1972, vol. 2, pp. 146-148, we read:

"One of the first Zen masters who introduced the idea of the *nembutsu* (recitation of the sacred name of Amitabha) was Yang-ming Yen-che-u (died 975 CE). He attached great importance to the Zen yogis devoting themselves to the practice of *nembutsu*, to the extent of declaring that among those who followed Zen without *nembutsu* nine out of ten would miss the final goal, whereas those who practiced the *nembutsu* would achieve realization all without exception; but the best are those, he used to say, who practice Zen and the *nembutsu*, for they are like a tiger with two horns...

"(In his turn,) K'ung-ku King-lung, teaching at the beginning of the XVth century... said:

"Those who practice Zen devote themselves exclusively to it, thinking that they are striving to achieve calm and nothing else; concerning the invocation of the name of Buddha in order to be reborn in the Pure Land, worshipping him and reciting the sutras morning and evening, they practice none of this. Regarding these faithful, it may be said that they have Zen but no *nembutsu*. However, in truth these Zen disciples are not of the good kind; they are only good at preaching the exercise of *kô-an*, they are like staffs, stones or bricks. When they are affected by this kind of mental illness, they cannot be saved, except perhaps one among ten. Zen is a living spirit; it is like a gourd floating on water, which upon being touched dances wonderfully. It is also said that one should pay homage to the living spirit of the masters rather than to their dead words'..."

Suzuki comments concerning the above (p. 148):

"There is something lame in this interpretation, but the fact cannot be denied that the *nembutsu*, at that time, was sapping the doorways of Zen, and we are going to see that in the psychology of *nembutsu* there is a factor that could easily ally itself with the exercise of *kô-an* in its mechanical phase. For, despite his attitude towards the *nembutsu*, which he considered like some kind of practice for the *shravaka*, K'ung-ku kept on preconizing it as being as effective as the *kô-an* in the realization of the true way of Buddha."

⁶⁷ In the thirteenth century, in Japan, there arose a new sect that, just like the *Tendai* School, is based on the *Lotus* or *Saddharmapundarika Sutra*, but which, being radically different from *Tendai*, bears the name of its founder: Nichiren (1222-1282).

The latter claimed he had obtained Awakening merely by understanding the teachings of the *Lotus* or *Saddharmapundarika Sutra*, and asserted that in order to attain Awakening it was enough to read this *Sutra*, recite the text's title with the formula "veneration to the *Lotus Sutra of the Good Law*" or "namu myoho rengo kyo," and apply the virtuous behavior of the *bodhisattva*. Thereby, Nichiren decreed the uselessness of the totality of the meditation practices and in general of the methods that, on the basis of his own practice and Awakening, the Buddha Shakyamuni taught his direct disciples, and that subsequently were compiled in the sutras and the rest of the Buddhist Canon. Paradoxically, Nichiren decreed the schools that practiced the meditations taught by Shakyamuni to be heretical, and dreamed of establishing in his country what he fancied to be the true doctrine of the Buddha, which was no other than his own concoction. Convinced patriot, Nichiren wanted Japan to be the center of this supposedly "genuine doctrine of the Buddha," from where he expected it to irradiate to the whole world. His nationalism led his Sect to argue vehemently for the formation of a worldly Buddhist empire that, having its center in Japan, should encompass the whole of the planet.

In the twentieth century, on the basis of the original Nichiren, there developed the Nichiren Shoshu or "True Nichiren School," which originated with Nikko, a disciple of the founder, and which venerates Nichiren as the "Buddha of final times."

Based on the same tradition there arose also the Rissho Koseikai, the Soka Gakkai and the Nipponzan Myohoji. Among the latter, the Soka Gakkai, founded by schoolteacher Makiguchi Tsunesaburo, has effectively extended throughout the whole world, to such an extent that in 1995 it was present in 115 countries and counted 1.260.000 members outside Japan (330.000 in North America, 10.000 in Central America, 190.000 in South America, 709.000 in non-Japanese Asia, 15.000 in Europe and 5.000 in the Near East) (Gardini, Walter, 1995). Just like the rest of present day Nichiren schools, this group centers its practice on the veneration of Nichiren and the so-called "three great mysteries." In 1960 Daisaku Ikeda assumed leadership of the sect, and later on he founded a political party, which supposedly intended to found "the type of democracy that would harmonize with Buddhism," which should establish a "humanitarian socialism," and which would try to achieve world peace and general welfare (aims that seem quite at odds with the Fascism of which the twenty century Nichiren Schools have been accused).

However, Ikeda's writings against the traditional forms of Buddhism, his ruthless criticism of the Christian religion and his intransigence gained him the reprehension of his own country's National League of Religions, made up of Buddhists and Christians. In 1960 Ikeda declared that he would continue to seek the annihilation of "heretical" religions (i.e., of the orthodox forms of Buddhism, as well as of the rest of world religions) and kept on reinforcing the practice of what Walter Gardini called "a totalitarian exclusivism" (*Ibidem*, p. 151). In reaction to the orientation of this sect, in 1969 University Professor Fujiwara Hirotsu published the book *I Denounce the Soka Gakkai*, which accused this sect of using political methods similar to those employed by the Nazis. However, in the General Assembly of May 3, 1970, Ikeda presented a restructuring of the program, promising "...an absolute separation between politics and religion, freedom for all members of the Soka Gakkai to vote for whichever party (they would choose), opening of the *Komeito* to all, respect for the religions hitherto regarded as 'heretical', giving up the method of forced conversions 'even if this implies losing one half of our members'." (*Ibidem*, p. 151) (For an ampler account of this Sect, see Gardini, Walter [1995], pp. 148-157.)

In Powers, John, 2000, we read concerning the latest schism among the followers of Nichiren: "After an acrimonious battle between the priesthood (of the original, monastic Nichiren Shoshu) and the lay leadership (of the Soka Gakkai), in 1991 the high priest of the Nichiren Shoshu, Nikken Abe, officially excommunicated the lay Soka Gakkai organization. He declared that only the priesthood of the Nichiren Shoshu represented the true tradition of Nichiren, and further claimed that only its *gohonzon* (a scroll inscribed by Nichiren with the Chinese characters of the *daimoku*) is an authentic basis for chanting and worship. The priests of the Nichiren Shoshu assert that the practice of chanting the *daimoku* ("*Namu Myoho rengo-kyo*," "Praise to the *Lotus Sutra*") requires that the practitioner perform it in front of an authentic *gohonzon* and that those used by the Soka Gakkai are ineffective for worship."

⁶⁸ According to the *T'ien-t'ai* school of Chinese Buddhism, there are five periods in the proclamation of the *Dharma* by Shakyamuni: (1) that of the *Sutra Buddhavatamsaka*, in which it was established that the universe was the manifestation of the absolute; (2) that of the *agamas* (Pali, *nikaya*; Tib., *lung*), consisting of the four (or five if the *kshudraka* or lesser *agama* may be counted) principal collections of *Hinayana* discourses of Shakyamuni contained in the Sanskrit *Tripitaka*, which he taught upon verifying that his students had not understood the meaning of what he proclaimed in the first period; (3) that of the *Vaipulya*

sutras, or the most extensive sutras of the *Mahayana*, as the first step of this vehicle (but excluding those that specifically enter into another category); (4) that of the sutras of the *Prajñāparamita*, and (5) that of the *Lotus Sutra* (*Saddharmapundarika*)—which contains the last Buddhist truth, beyond the division into gradual and swift methods—and of the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*.

For this school, (1) contains the “round” or “total” method, which comprises the gradual method of the *Mahayana* as well as the sudden one of this same vehicle; (2) contains only teachings of the *Hinayana* (consisting in the Sanskrit translations of the four *nikaya*); (3) contains all the doctrines; (4) contains the “round” doctrine, as well as the general one (for the use of the shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas, and the bodhisattvas) and the special one (only for the use of bodhisattvas), and (5) is the one which in the strictest sense can be considered “round” or “perfect.”

⁶⁹ The *Hua-yen* school classifies the teachings of Shakyamuni, not so much based on the time periods in which the Buddha gave them, but based on their content, in the following way: (1) the doctrines of the *Hinayana*, contained in the *agamas*; (2) the elemental doctrine of the *Mahayana*, contained in the Chinese schools which gave continuity to the *Madhyamaka* and *Yogachara* schools of Indian Buddhism; (3) the definitive doctrine of the *Mahayana*, corresponding to the *T’ien-t’ai* school; (4) the “sudden” doctrine, represented by *Ch’an* or *Zen*, and (5) the “round” doctrine of the *Mahayana*, which is that of the *Hua-yen* school.

⁷⁰ The periods according to the *San-lun* School are: (1) The one in which the *Buddhavatamsakasutra* was taught; (2) Since Shakyamuni’s disciples failed to understand the above teaching, he was forced to bestow the many teachings that constituted this new phase, including all doctrines of the *Hinayana* and most of the *Mahayana*; (3) Then Shakyamuni’s disciples became ready for higher teachings, and so the Awake One was able to proceed into this phase by teaching the *Saddharmapundarikasutra* or *Lotus Sutra*.

⁷¹ According to *Prajñāparamita* literature, *Prajñā* or wisdom can be relative or absolute.

The relative, which is developed progressively in the gradual *Mahayana*, and which consists in an intelligence that allows for the correct comprehension of the teachings, is one of the fifty-one (51) mental factors or mental events (Skt., *chaitasika* or *ekepañchashachchaitasika*; Tib., *semjung* [*sems-byung*] or *semjung ngachutsachik* [*sems-byung lnga-bcu-rtsa-gcig*]) listed in the literature associated with the *Abhidharma* (one of the “three baskets” or *pitakas* constituting the *Tripitaka*), which manifest in the conditioned sphere marked by active *avidya* or delusion (i.e., by the second and third of the types of *avidya* or *marigpa* considered in note 111) corresponding to *samsara*. In particular, it is one of the five object-determining mental factors or mental events (Tib., *yul so-sor nges-pa lnga*).

In the *Prajñāparamita* texts, absolute *prajñā* is the wisdom that apprehends absolute truth, beyond the made and conditioned, beyond the unawareness and the delusion corresponding to the different types of *avidya* in the threefold Dzogchen classification adopted here, beyond *samsara*. This type of *prajñā* may manifest at some moment in the gradual *Mahayana*, mainly in the framework of the training in the *paramita* of *prajñā* and of the practice of *vipashyana*; in turn, the sudden *Mahayana* has as its pivot the application of numerous methods in order to allow its sudden manifestation.

⁷² This explanation of the basic craving called *trishna* successively refers to the three types of *trishna* explained in a previous section of this chapter: *kama-trishna* or craving for pleasure, *bhava-trishna* or thirst-for-existence, and *vibhava-trishna* or craving for self-annihilation.

⁷³ The Dzogchen teachings designate the state free from delusion in which the nondual primordial gnosis of awareness reGnizes its own face (*rangngo shepa* [*rang-ngo shes-pa*]), so that it becomes perfectly patent, by the Tibetan term *rigpa* (*rig-pa*), which corresponds to the Sanskrit *vidya*—and which in this book I translate sometimes as Truth (in the sense of absence of error or delusion), sometimes as [nondual] Presence, sometimes as Awake Awareness. (Alternatively, *qua* Base, nondual primordial gnosis or awareness may be called *rigpa qua* Base, and the reGnition of this gnosis of awareness that makes its own face patent may be called *rigpa-qua*-Path or *rigpa-qua*-Fruit, according to the case. However, it is far more common that what here I have called **rigpa qua Base** be called **semnyi** [*sems-nyid*; Skt., *chittata* or *chitta-eva*] or “nature of mind,” *yeshe* [*ye-shes*; Skt., *jñāna*] or “primordial gnosis,” *changchubsem* [*byang-chub-sems*; Skt., *bodhichitta*], etc., and that what here I have called *rigpa-qua*-Path and *rigpa-qua*-Fruit simply be called *rigpa*.) **REVISE THIS IDENTIFICATION AND THE USAGE OF THE TERM RIGPA QUA BASE THROUGHOUT.**

Avidya and *marigpa* (*ma-rig-pa*) are terms composed by (1) a privative prefix (the Sanskrit *a* and the Tibetan *ma*) and (2) the words that in the context of the Dzogchen teaching I have been translating as Truth (in the sense of absence of error or delusion), [nondual] Presence and Awake Awareness. This is due to the fact that the most basic manifestation of *avidya* or *marigpa* is the basic unawareness of the true nature of the

Base in which Awake Awareness is obscured and which is the first of the three types of *avidya* posited by a Dzogchen classification considered in note 111, but which also underlies the active delusion at the root of *samsara* (consisting in the second type of *avidya*, which involves dualism and a confusion of categories, but also involving the third, which consists in ignoring delusion to be such).

In the teaching of the Four Noble Truths (*arya-satya*) proper to the First Promulgation, associated with the *Hinayana*, the Second Noble Truth, which is that of the cause (*samudaya*) of suffering, is said to be *trishna*, which in this context has the sense of “craving.” However, as shown in the regular text, certain *Mahayana*, *Vajrayana*, and *Atiyogatantrayana* interpretations of the Four Noble Truths, in agreement with the chain of causal origination of the *pratitya samutpada*, have established that *trishna* derives from *avidya*—which here must be understood as involving the three main senses the term has in the threefold classification adopted here and therefore as a delusion or error, the condition of possibility of which is the unawareness of the true nature or essence of all reality that is the first of the types of *avidya* considered here. In fact, craving and desire come from the illusion that we lack something that would be necessary for us to feel whole—or, in other words, from the *avidya* that introduces an illusory cleavage into the completeness and plenitude of our true condition and that makes us experience a lack-of-completeness-that-demands-to-be-filled or lack-of-plenitude-that-demands-to-be-filled.

The above are the senses of the terms *trishna* and *avidya* when they refer to divergent interpretations of the Second Noble Truth in the *Sutrayana*. However, in other general Buddhist teachings these two terms are given more specific meanings; in particular, they are also used to refer to two of the three main defilements that, according to general Buddhism, arise in *samsara*, and which are called the three “roots of unwholesomeness” (*akushala*): (1) *dvesha* or aversion; (2) *trishna*, which here has the particular sense of avidity and desire as different from the other two main defilements (rather than being the force behind all defilements); and (3) *avidya*, understood as mental obfuscation and bewilderment and therefore also as different from the other two main defilements (rather than being the force behind all defilements).

⁷⁴ The reader should keep in mind that the meaning of the term “delusion” is different from that of the word “illusion.” By “illusion” I designate, for example, the perception of a falling hair by one who suffers from cataracts, the apprehension of a shell as yellow by one suffering from jaundice, the vision of a gigantic snow ball in the Sahara, the perception of something bi-dimensional as being tri-dimensional, etc. On the other hand, “delusion” implies confusion and may consist in believing that an illusion is not merely an illusion but is actual reality—or in taking the relative as absolute, the interdependent as independent, what we value as intrinsically valuable, etc.

⁷⁵ For example, the *Madhyamika Prasangika* view in this regard is that the root of *samsara* (i.e., of cyclic existence) is the basic delusion called *avidya* or marigpa (*ma-rig-pa*); that this delusion is of two types, namely the misconception and delusory experience of the nature and status of the person and the misconception and delusory experience of the nature and status of phenomena other than the person (such as the aggregates that interact in the production of the misconception and delusory experience of the nature of the person); that the misconception and delusory experience of the nature of the person depends on the misconception and delusory experience of the nature of the aggregates (which as just noted are themselves phenomena-that-are-not-persons); and that this does not imply that there are two roots of cyclic existence, for both misconceptions and delusory experiences are exactly the same in nature—which this school explains as a conception and experience of inherent existence, where there is no such mode of existence.

However, according to the *Madhyamika Swatantrikas*, the misconception and delusory experience of the nature of the person and the misconception and delusory experience of the nature of phenomena other than persons are not exactly the same in nature. Furthermore, they make a distinction between the root of cyclic existence, which is the conception of a self in persons, and the final root of cyclic existence, which is the conception of a self in phenomena.

In terms of the teachings of Dzogchen *Ati*, the misconception and delusory experience of *all* types of phenomena as existing inherently is a function of the delusory valuation of thought (which I explain briefly in this chapter), in interaction with a series of mental functions.

⁷⁶ As will be stated more extensively in a subsequent footnote, references to contemporary physics made in this book are not intended to imply that in the twentieth century physics suddenly elucidated the definitive nature and structure of the material universe. In fact, as I showed in a note to Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, as well as in Chapter One of Capriles, Elías, 1994, the contents of the sciences are ideological in nature, and in the opinion of some thinkers they are more than ideologies, as they are the very matrix that make possible the existence of power (political, economic and so on).

Though it is widely assumed that the theories of present day physics could as well change radically in the future with the progressive development of research and conceptual elaboration (just like those of nineteenth century physics changed radically in the twentieth century), the coincidences between contemporary physics and the world views of *Mahayana*, *Vajrayana* and *Atiyogatantrayana* forms of Buddhism are too impressive to be overlooked. They have been discussed in different works by Watts, Capra, Zukav, Bentov, LeShan, Ricard and Trinh Xuan Thuan, and many others (including the author of this book: cf. Capriles, Elías, 1977; Capriles, Elías, 1986 and Capriles, Elías, 1994).

⁷⁷ This absolute completeness and plenitude is disrupted *in* our samsaric experience but not in absolute reality. Moreover, it is disrupted *by* our experience insofar as the term “experience” refers solely to *samsara*. In fact, in English and other European languages the term derives from the Latin *ex-perire*, meaning “going out from inside” or “dying from inside,” and therefore there can be no doubt that it implies the subject-object duality.

The assertion according to which only in *samsara* is there experience, is ratified in Thinle Norbu Rinpoche, 1997, pp. 3-4:

“...it is not said in Buddhism that Buddha “experienced” Awakening. Awakening is beyond experience. Experience occurs between the duality of subject and object, and there is no existence of subject and object in Awakening. Experience comes from feeling, and feeling belongs to sentient beings, not to fully Awake Buddhas. Awakening is completely beyond either feeling or numbness.

“From the point of view of the causal vehicle (*hetuyana*), it can be said that bodhisattvas, sublime beings who are on the Path of Awakening and have not yet attained Buddhahood, still have experience due to traces of the residue of previous habit. Therefore, it could be said that when Buddha took birth many times as a bodhisattva before attaining Awakening, he had experience, including the experience of suffering caused by the passions, which he later taught about when he attained the omniscience of fully Awake Buddhahood. But this explanation of experience can only be made from the point of view of the causal vehicle, in which bodhisattvas are differentiated from Buddhas. According to the resultant vehicle (*phalayana*), bodhisattvas are fully Awake manifestations of Buddhas effortlessly emanating for the benefit of beings and so they are also beyond experience, indivisible from the Wisdom-mind of Buddhas.

“According to the Buddhist point of view, experience is always connected with dualistic mind. Dualistic mind depends on the ordinary inner elements of sentient beings and ordinary outer elements of the [apparently] substantial world, which are the basis of all that exists in duality. These ordinary elements are affected by inner root circumstances, such as the conditions of the [apparently] substantial world, which always rely on each other and always change. The experience of sentient beings is to continually react to the circle of manipulation between subject and object, inner and outer elements, and root (cause) and contributing circumstances, which all continuously change because they are occupied by the habit of duality. The object is unreliable because the subject is unreliable, like a mental patient who depends on a schizophrenic psychiatrist. Sometimes he may feel worse and sometimes better, but he cannot transcend his situation, because of endlessly circling between the subjective problems of the self and the objective problems of the other.”

⁷⁸ If we assume the realist’s hypothesis, we can explain this in terms of twentieth century physics, and note that according to Field Theory the universe is a continuum of energy with no empty spaces in it, which therefore can be categorized as absolute plenitude. In terms of this hypothesis, the Buddhist view would have to be explained by asserting that, since human consciousness is not a substance separate from the rest of totality, it is part of the same continuum of plenitude. When the illusion that we are a consciousness separate from the energy field arises, there arises the illusion that we are not part of that plenitude, and thus we experience lack of plenitude.

However, this is merely one of the possible different hypotheses concerning reality. Below in the regular text I explain how the Buddhist view can be explained in terms of each of them.

⁷⁹ It is said that some forms of Buddhism are *higher* than others when their application allows *individuals of greater capacity* to obtain a *most radical and complete realization in a shorter time*. Therefore, they are “higher” in a relative sense: they are higher *for the individual with the necessary capacity to practice them*, and *only insofar as their practice works for the individual*. For individuals of lesser capacity, “lesser” vehicles can be superior to “higher” ones, insofar as they can be more effective. Likewise, at times, when the practice of “higher” vehicles does not work for individuals of higher capacities, “lower” ones may be more effective for them, and thus be temporarily higher than “higher” vehicles for them.

⁸⁰ As Jean -Paul Sartre points out well, this denial, in spite of constituting a single act, can be explained as a double negation, for in one and the same operation, we deny what experience has taught us and we deny that we have denied something. (This double negation is phenomenological rather than logical, for a double logical negation undoes the first negation, but the same is not the case with a phenomenological one. Furthermore, it is equally plausible to explain it as an infinite negation, for in the same operation we also deny that we have denied that we have denied something—and so on *ad infinitum*.) This is an instance of the self-deception that Sartre designated as “bad faith” and which the French author explained by saying that we deceive ourselves and in the same operation we deceive ourselves about the fact that we are deceiving ourselves. (And, it may be added, about the fact that we are deceiving ourselves about the fact that we are deceiving ourselves and so on *ad infinitum*.) For further detail, see Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980, Capriles, Elías, 1994, and Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols.; etc.

⁸¹ It is in this way that we give rise to what Heidegger called *wertverhaftete Dinge* or “value-endowed things.” In fact, we could consider the absolute plenitude of our true nature as absolute value, and say—like Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*—that our being *qua* individuals (which Sartre designated as “being-for-itself”) is being-for-value: *qua* individual entities, we feel separate from the plenitude of the universe, giving rise to a lack-of-plenitude/value that compels us constantly to try to attain plenitude/value, but without losing ourselves as individual entities. This contradiction prevents the overcoming of the *duhkha* inherent in the delusion that, as we have seen, is at the root of our illusion of being an individual entity. The philosophy Sartre developed in *Being and Nothingness* differs from Buddhist philosophies principally in that, for the French philosopher, absolute plenitude was barred to us, whereas the very aim of Buddhism is to achieve the dissolution of the illusion of individuality and of the *duhkha* inherent to it, in the plenitude of the given. (Of course, this plenitude will not be realized by the supposedly individual entity that we always thought we were [which, as Sartre was right in noting, can never attain the value/plenitude which it constantly longs for], but our true nature, which, as we saw, is in itself absolute plenitude. It is for this reason that Buddhism distinguishes Buddhas from “sentient beings” and asserts that Buddhahood involves the extinction of the illusory entity designated as “sentient being.”)

⁸² In the social group of criminals, it can happen that the more violent and ruthless an individual is, the more the rest will value him or her; conversely, the activities that “decent” people have traditionally valued can be a source of disgrace. In *Stigma*, Ervin Goffman tells us how an ex-convict who enjoyed good reading, before leaving the public library, used to look up and down the street to make sure that none of his criminal friends would see him leaving such a shameful place. Likewise, under some circumstances the fear or hatred that those who are not criminals can feel toward a criminal can induce in him or her shame or conflict (we often see criminals in the news covering their faces, which to some extent may be aimed at avoiding notoriety that may hamper their career, but to some extent may be aimed at avoiding being the object of general opprobrium), but under other different circumstances it can also serve as a source of pride (for example, by letting other criminals see how much he or she is feared and hated, and therefore how valuable he is in terms of “criminal” values): it is well known that public enemy number one can be very proud of being number one in his or her field—and, in fact, the more one is hated and despised by many, the more pronounced an illusion of self existence one will obtain. The Greeks understood negative values as the mere lack of positive ones; for example, evil was for them merely the absence of good. However, Kant was very correct in explaining evil (and in general all negative values) to be a value and an active force, both with a minus sign (so that evil and other negative values, rather than being merely an absence of value, were anti-values and negative active forces).

⁸³ I am using the terms in the senses given them in Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980; in Capriles, Elias, 1977, I discussed from a Buddhist standpoint Sartre’s interpretation of the sadist and the masochist, and outlined a theory of the genesis of these “deviations.”

⁸⁴ Someone’s ugliness, bad manners, bad taste and so on may also cause us to dismiss the person as a source of value, for being appreciated by an ugly person, etc., will not endow us with value in the eyes of others: they will think the person who appreciates us has no value and may be ready to value anyone who accepts him or her in spite of his or her ugliness, etc.

⁸⁵ Since what attracts us depends in great measure on our *karma* (a concept that will be explained in greater detail further on, and which includes the one produced in past lives), individuals often find successive partners who allow them to repeat the same dramas. This, in its turn, can be related in greater or lesser measure with what R. D. Laing called “family mapping:” the replication, in the family-of-reproduction, of relationship systems internalized in the family-of-origin.

⁸⁶ For an exhaustive explanation of the impossibility of obtaining plenitude through falling in love and having a love affair or a lasting passional relationship, see Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943: 31 edition, 1980. For a Buddhist use of the explanations of Sartre, see (1) Capriles, Elias, 1977; and (2) Capriles, Elias, 1986.

⁸⁷ The fact that some times celebrities try to go incognito does not contradict their addiction to notoriety; on the contrary, it shows that, in spite of this addiction, fame entails great inconvenience insofar as it invades private life and curtails individual freedom. Moreover, although celebrities go incognito because they want to be ignored by the public at times when recognition by crowds could be bothersome, they would be terrified of being ignored by the crowds when they are not going incognito, for that would imply that they have lost their fame and appeal, and with it they have lost the illusory value that these used to afford them. In the same way, less famous individuals may *pretend* going incognito only to make others believe (and thereby make themselves believe also) that they have reached a high degree of notoriety.

⁸⁸ Of course, we in our turn value those who value precisely what we value, and consequently we are concerned as to whether or not they have a positive opinion of us; conversely, we despise whoever despises what we value, and consequently we have very little regard for their opinion of us. Nevertheless, in this way we put ourselves in the hands of those whose opinion we value, for if they come to despise us or ignore us, they will succeed in harming us to the extent that we have valued them and made our own value depend on their opinion of us. Furthermore, we never succeed in completely ignoring or dismissing the judgments of even those we care for the least, and so we are *to a certain extent* exposed to their judgments.

Most people value those who belong to the “highest” social class, but this is not universal, for leftists, hippies, criminals and so on either despise them or are indifferent toward them. Though some value prestigious academics, others find them a bore or are indifferent toward them. Though some value the Masters of some spiritual tradition, others think they are weirdoes or are indifferent toward them. And so on.

⁸⁹ J. Krishnamurti did not distinguish between the identification in terms of concepts of the group to which we belong, which may be indispensable for contemporary human beings—for example, upon crossing an international border we have to be able to say what our nationality is and show the corresponding passport or required document—and the *delusory valuation-absolutization* of that identification, which makes us feel that inherently and absolutely *we are* what we have thought or said we are. Consequently those who follow his teaching might think that they should avoid certain particular thoughts—some of which are indispensable for life—instead of understanding that what they should overcome is the *delusory valuation-absolutization* of *all* thoughts. And, even if they would spontaneously understand it, in Krishnamurti’s teachings they would not find effective methods leading to the spontaneous liberation of delusorily valued thoughts.

⁹⁰ According to Buddhism, pride is both a mode and a transformation of aversion, and envy and jealousy are modes and transformations of desire, craving or thirst. In fact, trying to climb in *samsara* by pushing others down is a function of aversion, and wanting what others have (whether objects, as in envy, or the appreciation of people, as in jealousy) is a function of desire or craving. Furthermore, each passion begets other passions; for example, envy and jealousy beget aversion toward those whom we envy or are jealous of. And so on.

⁹¹ The states in which sensual pleasure is enjoyed in a stable and relatively durable manner belong to the lower regions of the realm of the gods (*deva loka*, *sura loka*, *deva gati* or *sura gati*: the “highest” of the six psychological states or “realms of samsaric existence” posited by Buddhism), consisting in the higher regions of the sphere of sensuality, *kama loka* or *kamadhatu* (the “lowest” of the three samsaric spheres posited by Buddhism).

It must be remarked that despite the fact that the term “Dionysian pleasure” is often applied to all kinds of sensual enjoyment, there is evidence suggesting that the cult of Dionysus may have comprised a Path of spiritual liberation featuring methods analogous to those taught by the various forms of Tantrism, which seems to have been genealogically connected with a common ancestor of the latter, and even might have featured methods based on the principle of Dzogchen. In Daniélou, Alain, 1979, Spanish 1987, it is claimed that the cults of both Shiva and Dionysus, as well as the Egyptian cult of Osiris, were manifestations of one and the same transnational tradition, which was disrupted by the Indo-European and Semitic invasions (and, in fact, it is a well-known fact that one of the aims of Alexander the Great in his thrust toward the East was to find the origins of dark-skinned Dionysus in the Himalayas and India, for in ancient Greece it was well-known that the origins of this deity were related to this region). Likewise, in Capriles, Elías, 2000b and in the unpublished, enlarged, revised and corrected version of this book; in

Capriles, Elías, work in progress; and in Capriles, Elías, 1998a, Capriles, Elías, 1998b, and Capriles, Elías, 1999a; I referred to the probable genetic connections between Shivaism, the cult of Dionysus, Persian Zurvanism, and the Bön tradition of Zhang-zhung. For further information concerning these connections see the first notes to Part One and especially to Part Two of this book.

- ⁹² There is a clear analogy between those states in which aesthetic pleasure is enjoyed in a stable and relatively durable manner, and the sphere of form, *rupa loka* or *rupadhatu* (the intermediate of the three samsaric spheres posited by Buddhism), which corresponds to the middle regions of the realm of the gods (*deva loka*, *sura loka*, *deva gati* or *sura gati*: the “highest” of the six psychological states or realms of samsaric existence posited by Buddhism).

In the case of aesthetic pleasure, what happens is the following: since a single consciousness cannot adopt two different attitudes at the same time, when we *admire* the object of aesthetic appreciation and therefore we *accept* it, by so doing we are accepting the totality of the universe, which includes the mental factor or mental event [*chaitasika* or *semjung* (*sems-byung*)] that the *Abhidharma* designates as *vedana* or *tsorwa* (*tshor-ba*) and which in English is known as *feeling-tone*: the so-called “mental” sensations that accompany all perception and that manifest principally in the center of the trunk at the level of the heart. Since, as it will be seen later, “pleasant” sensations are nothing but *sensations accepted by consciousness*, the acceptance of “mental” sensations which takes place when we accept the object of consciousness causes us to experience a sensation (*feeling-tone*) of pleasure, which then we interpret as irrefutable proof of the inherent (rather than culturally conditioned) beauty of the object—which is an instance of delusion, not only insofar as it is based on the subject-object duality and other products of the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought, but also because so many of the usual instances of aesthetic appreciation are culturally conditioned rather than being determined by a form’s supposedly inherent harmony (pre-Kantian aesthetics), or by a form’s adequation to *a priori* principles of the faculty of judgment (Kant), etc. For a far more detailed discussion of this and a succinct critique of Kantian aesthetics, see Capriles, Elías, 2000, or the forthcoming second, revised and enlarged edition of this book; a more thorough, provisional critique of Kantian aesthetics was done by this author in a work produced when he was a student of philosophy.

- ⁹³ The states in which transpersonal pleasure is enjoyed in a stable and relatively durable manner belong to the sphere of formlessness, *arupa loka* or *arupadhatu* (the highest of the three samsaric spheres posited by Buddhism), which corresponds to the higher regions of the realm of the gods (*deva loka*, *sura loka*, *deva gati* or *sura gati*: the “highest” of the six psychological states or realms of samsaric existence posited by Buddhism).

In the case of yogic-transpersonal pleasure, the general dynamic is similar to that of aesthetic pleasure, the difference being that what induces acceptance by consciousness of its object is not the latter’s beauty, but its apparently limitless/absolute/total character—and therefore it *resembles* the aesthetic admiration of the sublime far more than the aesthetic appreciation of the beautiful. As stated in the preceding note, since a single consciousness cannot adopt two different attitudes simultaneously, when we *admire*—and thus *accept*—the pseudo-totality that here is our object, our consciousness is accepting the totality of the universe, which includes the so-called “mental” sensation accompanying perception. Since “pleasant” sensations are nothing but *sensations accepted by consciousness*, by accepting the totality of the continuum-of-sense-data-out-of-which-objects-can-be-singled-out as though it were a single, limitless entity, we obtain a *feeling-tone* of pleasure, which we interpret as irrefutable proof of the marvelous and supposedly absolute character of the pseudo-totality which is the object of our contemplation, and with which the mental subject associated with dualistic consciousness—even though it is still functioning as a subject apparently at a distance from its object—identifies (or, in more correct, Sartrean terms, which it *becomes*). As the mental subject identifies with (or, more correctly, *becomes*) the pseudo-totality appearing as object, it gains the illusion of having surpassed the subject-object duality and achieved totality—which then may be wrongly understood as “having attained Awakening.”

- ⁹⁴ In fact, as will be shown in a subsequent note, while the common teachings of the *Sutrayana* place the sphere of formlessness (*arupa loka* or *arupadhatu*) at the top of *samsara*, the special teachings of the *Tantrayana* or *Vajrayana* invert this order and place the sphere of sensuality (*kama loka* or *kamadhatu*) at the top.

- ⁹⁵ Normally, both the quality and the quantity (intensity) of sensation enter into play, and as a result of the combination of them either we accept or reject our sensations right away; however, later on other elements can also enter into play and determine whether we accept or reject our sensations. For example, if a sensation we deem pleasurable and therefore accept, thereby experiencing pleasure, goes on

uninterruptedly for too long, at some point we will reject it, experiencing displeasure. Likewise, because of reasons different from the quality and quantity of the sensation, which have more to do with the habits the individual made during his or her upbringing, a masochist can accept a sensation having a combination of quality and quantity that would lead most people to reject it and thereby to experience pain.

- ⁹⁶ It is well-known that those masochists who ask their partners to whip them, often learned to enjoy as pleasure the sensation produced by whipping because during their infancy they were whipped on parts of their body having an erogenous potential, which resulted in erotic stimulation, which in its turn made them associate the sensation of “pain” to the erotic sensation and experience it as pleasure—as a result of which they associated erotic stimulation and pleasure with being whipped. However, this cannot be properly understood out of the context of the type of relations that, especially in early infancy, prevailed in the interaction between the individual and her or his most significant others, and may be related with having learned to adopt a humiliating position in relationships, for reasons that sometimes have to do with the following explanation of psychological masochism.

Within the framework of a psychological sense of the word “masochism” that is not restricted to sexual stimulation associated with physical pain and may even be wholly unrelated with it, it could be said that masochism has to do with an extremely poor self-image—and, according to the explanation in Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980, with the fear of being rejected resulting from the imperviousness and/or spiteful attitude of the most important significant others, which leads the person to assume humiliation and rejection beforehand rather than to attempt to gain acceptance from others, because of fear of the risk of being rejected by those others.

It must be noted, however, that no explanation of physical masochism can be fully comprehensive if understood outside the context of the explanation proposed in the regular text of this book.

- ⁹⁷ An interaction in which the increase of the activity of one party elicits an increase in the activity of the other, which elicits an increase of activity in the first, and so on, in such a way that the activity of both parties increase interdependently.

- ⁹⁸ I avoided using the term orgasm insofar as there does not seem to be universal consensus with regard to the concept’s definition—which, in the case of the male, common folk understand as a synonym of ejaculation. Some of the Eastern traditions preconizing the retention of the seed-essence and many contemporary sexologists regard the copious emission by the woman of a water-like fluid in moments of vaginal climax as an ejaculation partly equivalent to that of the man, and thus some of these Eastern traditions teach women to retain this liquid in order to keep their energy and vitality at a peak. However, some specific Tantric Buddhist traditions remark that it is the loss of the ovum in menstruation that is comparable to the emission of spermatozoa by the man, for just as in the man it is the spermatozoa that are the coarse physical correlate of the specific aspect of the seed-essence (Skt., *bindu*; Tib., thigle [*thig-le*]) that is to be retained for the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., thigle [*thig-le*]) to peak, in the woman it is the ovum that is the coarse physical correlate of this aspect of the seed-essence and that therefore must be retained (hence the use by women of a specific medicine in combination with practices of tsa-lung-thigle [*rtsa-rlung-thig le*] in order to stop menstruation). Since I have not at all specialized in the conceptions different categories of Ancient or Nyingmapa and New of Sarmapa Tantras express in this regard, I believe it may be better not to explore the matter further in this book.

- ⁹⁹ It is not possible to give a comprehensive explanation of human eroticism and sexuality in a few short paragraphs. The theory in Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980, is that an essential aspect of erotic desire is the wish for our consciousness to become flesh and *qua* consciousness-made-flesh somehow possess the Other’s-consciousness-made-flesh, which we intend to achieve through the contact between our flesh and the other’s flesh (in the case of both lovers, consciousness becomes flesh *in* the one who is experiencing sensations through the flesh, and *for* the Other who is touching the flesh in which consciousness has incarnated—and thus through the contact of flesh both parts attempt to achieve some kind of full, direct contact of consciousnesses). Sartre notes, however, that one does not wish to possess the Other’s consciousness in the manner in which one possesses an object, for what one wishes to possess is the other’s consciousness *qua* freedom and spontaneity made flesh (and as recognizing our consciousness *qua* freedom and spontaneity made flesh).

However, this is to be placed in the ampler framework of Buddhist philosophy, which *to some extent* corresponds to the ampler framework of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*. All human acts ultimately aim at attaining absolute plenitude, which is only possible through the dissolution of the illusion of inherent

separateness and individuality; in the case of erotic relationships, both parties wish to attain absolute plenitude through absolute pleasure, which necessarily would entail the dissolution of the illusion of separateness and individuality in both partners. However, neither party is ready to accept this dissolution, for each wants to experience and enjoy as a separate conscious entity the pleasure ensuing from union, and each wants to “touch” the Other’s consciousness and “be touched” by the Other’s consciousness through incarnating as flesh and causing the Other to incarnate as flesh, and then pressing their naked bodies against each other—which implies that neither party is willing to accept its own dissolution as an apparently separate, individual consciousness. Furthermore, as noted in Laing, Ronald D., 1961, in a subsequent stage of the erotic relationship each party as a separate individual *may* wish to mark the other *qua* separate individual with the most intense experience of pleasure—which also implies that each wishes to remain as an apparently separate individual. (This is not always so to both parties, for in some cases one party may not be willing to give the other the satisfaction of being satisfied by him or her; however, also to this end the person has to remain as an apparently separate individual.)

Nevertheless, in the practice of the inner Tantras, erotic relationships are applied as a means for attaining absolute plenitude through absolute pleasure and thereby achieving the dissolution of the illusion of separateness and individuality in both parties. When this is achieved, there is a communion in the single awareness that is the common nature of both consciousness, which is incomparably deeper than the contact of two consciousnesses made flesh, and which allows both parties to achieve through the Other the most intense pleasure and the most perfect plenitude, precisely insofar as neither remains as an apparently separate individual.

I dealt with the drives and contradictions inherent in human sexuality in Capriles, Elías, 1977, where I quoted many pages of Sartre’s reflections in the framework of a comprehensive explanation of human sexuality in terms of the views characteristic of the Tantras (largely based on the information made available in Guenther, Herbert V., 1952). I dealt with the subject again in Capriles, Elías, 1986, in which I excluded most of the long extracts from Sartre’s work.

¹⁰⁰ In truth, in this case the object is not an infinitude, for insofar as it excludes the subject, the object is finite. Furthermore, according to the Mahasanghikas, the “formless” object involves form in a subtle sense.

¹⁰¹ The nature of our actions is reflected on our feeling-tones: when we find our actions acceptable in terms of the criteria we internalized during our upbringing, we accept ourselves and thus experience a pleasant feeling-tone. When we find our actions blameworthy in terms of the criteria we internalized during our upbringing, we reject ourselves and thus experience an unpleasant feeling-tone. When we do not find our actions either acceptable or reprehensible in terms of the criteria we internalized during our upbringing, we do neither accept nor reject ourselves and thus experience a neutral feeling-tone.

However, not all depends on the criteria we internalize. Even if we have been told consistently an act harmful to others is OK, upon carrying it out *our sensibility* will reveal to us that the act is not really OK, and thus we will reject ourselves upon doing it, no matter how subtly. Since in the long term positive, negative and neutral states (involving the respective feeling-tones) are the maturation of positive, negative and neutral karmas (insofar as these karmas were associated with acceptance, rejection or indifference, which creates the propensity for experiencing pleasure, pain or neutral feelings, respectively), the nature of karmas does not depend on our conditioning but on somehow objective laws. Hence the Buddhist explanation of the law of *karma* as being objective rather than depending on different internalized criteria of good and evil.

¹⁰² As will be shown in a subsequent note, the stage in the development of *samsara* that the Dzogchen teachings call “consciousness of the base-of-all” (Skt., *alaya vijñāna*; Tib., kunzhi namshe [*kun-gzhi rnam-shes*] or kunzhi nampar shepa [*kun-gzhi rnam-par shes-pa*]), upon being grasped at gives access to the realm of form, *rupa loka* or *rupadhatu*, with regard to which we read in Padmasambhava and others, 1973, Italian, 1977, p15: “The sphere of form is an ocean of vibration that becomes ever more turbulent as one moves away from its peaceful profundities; sensitive to the slightest tremor of pain or displeasure, the impulses [that are inherent to this sphere] formulate their own antidote to disharmony.” In fact, the consciousness of the base-of-all and the realm to which it may give access are key catalysts of the highest practices of the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings, which depend on the activation of aversion or zhedang (*zhe-sdang*; Skt., *dwesha*) before forms of the tsel mode of manifestation of energy stably appearing as object for long periods in an apparently external dimension. The point is that the consciousness of the base-of-all involves a preconceptual interest that *tends* to single out and take as figure structures that conserve their pattern within the total change of the totality of sense data. Therefore if this “consciousness” is grasped at, it can give rise to the distinction figure-ground; in

turn, if this distinction does *not immediately* become the base for the activity of the next “consciousness,” which is the consciousness of the passions (Skt., *klišṭamanovijñāna*; Tib., *nyongmongpachen yikyi namshe* [*nyong-mongs-pa-can yid-kyi rnam-shes*]), rather than entering the realm of sensuality, *kāma loka* or *kāmadhātu*, we will establish ourselves in the realm of form, *rūpa loka* or *rūpadhātu*.

If *zhedang* manifested initially before bodily sensations rather than before apparently external forms and therefore would do so in experiences of the realm of sensuality, *kāma loka* or *kāmadhātu*, practitioners would develop a strong reticence to the practice, the dynamic or the realm of form described above in terms of a quotation from Padmasambhava and others (1973, Italian, 1977) would not manifest, and the practice would not lead to the integration of the external and the internal dimension or *jing* (*dbyings*) and the concomitant overlapping of the *tsel* and *rölpa* modes of manifestation of energy, and so it would not lead to the special modes of death characteristic of the Dzogchen teachings. All this will be discussed in Part Two of this book.

Finally, it may be noted that when the practice with the sphere of form is successful, this sphere manifests as the *sambhogakaya*—just as in successful practice with the sphere of formlessness, the latter must manifest as the *dharmakaya*, and in successful practice with the sphere of sensuality, the latter must manifest as the *nirmanakaya*.

¹⁰³ I say “we might” because some people may have a glimpse of the voidness of the total, empty expanse where all “physical” and “mental” phenomena manifest—the *dharmadhātu*—and, if they are beings of lower capacities, this may give rise to an experience of *panic* (irrational fear before the totality that in Greek mythology was represented by the god Pan, which is glimpsed when our attention becomes more *panoramic*). Therefore, according to the individual’s propensities, what seems to be a formless infinitude may produce pleasure or pain.

¹⁰⁴ In other works, on the basis of the theories developed in Bateson, Gregory, 1972 (and to some extent in Bateson, Gregory, 1979), I have explained this in terms of the relationship between the two brain hemispheres and the two types of mental process (primary and secondary) described in Freud, Sigmund, original work published 1895, Spanish edition used, 1974. See, in particular: Capriles, Elías, 1994 (Chapter Two), and Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

¹⁰⁵ The former is the traditional canonical title of the book; the latter is the title of the Tun Huang version, as well as the Sanskrit equivalent of the title of the Tibetan canonical translation.

¹⁰⁶ As we have seen, the three spheres (Skt., *tridhātu*, *triloka* or *trilokadhātu*; Tib., *khamsum* [*kham s gsum*] or *jigtenyi khamsum* [*jig-ten-gyi kham s gsum*]) are: (1) the sphere of sensuality (Skt., *kāmadhātu* or *kāma loka*; Tib., *döpaikham* [*’dod-pa’i kham s*]); (2) the sphere of form (Skt., *rūpadhātu* or *rūpa loka*; Tib., *zugkham* [*gzugs-kham s*]), which may be attained through the practice of the four contemplative absorptions (Skt., *chaturdhyāna*; Tib., *samten zhi* [*bsam-gtan bzhi*]); and (3) the sphere of formlessness (Skt., *arūpyadhātu* or *arūpa loka*; Tib., *zugmekyi kham* [*gzugs-med-kyi kham s*]), which has four subdivisions, consisting of the four formless absorptions (Skt., *chaturśamapatti*; Tib., *zugmepai nyomjug zhi* [*gzugs-med-pa’i snyoms-’jug bzhi*]) or four formless realms (Skt., *chaturarūpyadhātu*; Tib., *zugmekhi kham* [*gzugs-med kham s-pa’i gnas bzhi*]).

In their turn, the six psychological states or “realms of samsaric experience” (Skt., *sadgati* or *sadloka*; Tib., *jigtenyi kham drug* [*jig-ten-gyi kham s drug*]) are: (1) the realm of the gods (Skt., *deva loka*, *deva gati*, *sura loka* or *sura gati*; Tib., *lha’i kham* [*lha’i kham s*]); (2) the realm of antigods or titans (Skt., *asura loka* or *asura gati*; Tib., *lhamayingyi kham* [*lha-ma-yin-gyi kham s*]); (3) the realm of humans (Skt., *manushya loka* or *manushya gati*; Tib., *mikyikhi kham* [*mi-kyi kham s*]); (4) the realms of craving spirits or Tantaluses (Skt., *preta loka* or *preta gati*; Tib., *yidwaggyi kham* [*yi-dwags-gyi kham s*]); (5) the realms of animals (Skt., *tiryagioni loka* or *tiryagioni gati*; Tib., *düdro’i kham* [*dud-’gro’i kham s*]); and (6) the realm of purgatories (Skt., *naraka loka* or *naraka gati*; Tib., *nyälwai kham* [*dmyal-ba’i kham s*]).

The sphere of sensuality comprises the realm of purgatories, the realm of animals, the realm of craving spirits or Tantaluses, the realm of humans, the realm of antigods or titans, and the lower regions of the realm of gods. The sphere of form corresponds to the middle regions of the realm of gods. And the sphere of formlessness corresponds to the higher regions of the realm of gods.

Concerning the six psychological states or “realms of samsaric experience,” it must be noted that beings that are human in the physiological sense of the term (i.e., who are considered as such by present conventions and laws) are constantly migrating from one samsaric realm to another, precisely insofar as psychological states are always changing. In fact, when we find ourselves in a psychological state characterized by anger, hatred and malevolence, we have taken birth in the realm of purgatories. When we find ourselves in a

psychological state in which we avoid awareness of situations by acting in terms of habits, and in general when we take refuge in ignorance, we have taken birth in the realm of animals. When we find ourselves in a psychological state in which we are possessed by intense craving, by desire to possess, or by pure avarice, we have taken birth in the realm of craving spirits or Tantaluses. When we find ourselves in a psychological state in which we are able to question our experience in order to practice the Path of Awakening, being able to freely use our intelligence, we have taken birth in the human realm. When we find ourselves in a psychological state in which we are always struggling for status, power or position, or in which intrigue is our main interest, we have taken birth in the realm of antigods or titans. When we find ourselves in a psychological state in which we are possessed by pride, or in which we are attached to one or another kind of pleasure, or in which we are clinging to our present position, etc., we have taken birth in the realm of gods.

It is most important to keep in mind that in order to practice Buddhism or any genuine Path leading to Awakening or liberation, we must be in the human realm. Obviously we will lose this condition as we are possessed by different passions and thereby take birth in other realms, but we must have the capacity to recover our human condition in order to effectively practice the Path.

¹⁰⁷ In Spanish, this is called “matiz hedónico” (literally, “hedonic hue”).

¹⁰⁸ In Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980, these mechanisms were explained in terms of the concept of “bad faith” or self-deception by the individual consciousness, whereas Freud interpreted it as “repression” or concealment carried out by the “subconscious.” The Sartrean concept is closer to the Buddhist explanation of such phenomena than the Freudian one.

¹⁰⁹ In Pascal, Blaise, posthumous edition, 1669, Spanish translation, 1977, section “Annoyances,” thought 167, we read:

“Nature makes us miserable in every state; our desires make us imagine a blissful state, because they attribute to a state in which we do not find ourselves [all that in] the state in which we find ourselves [we view as the greatest] pleasures; but we would not be blissful upon attaining those pleasures because we would have other desires according to the [characteristics and lacks of the] new state. It is necessary to particularize this general proposition.

“We never keep to the present moment. We anticipate the future as if it were coming [too] slowly, in order to hurry its course; or we turn to the past to stop it, as [if it were escaping us] too rapidly: we go along wandering imprudently in times that are not ours, and we have no power in the only one that belongs to us [which is the now]; and we are so inane, that we think about those times that are nothing and run away without [fusing with] the only one that subsists [which at any time is the now].

“The point is that the present, usually, hurts us. We hide it from our sight, because it distresses us; and if it is pleasant we mourn when we see it escape. We try to sustain it in the future, and we think about arranging things that are not in our power for a time that we have no certainty at all will arrive.

“Let everyone examine their thoughts and they will find them all busy with the past and with the future. We do not think almost anything about the present; and if we do think about it, it is only to shed light on arranging the future. The present is never our aim: the past and the present are our means; only the future is our aim. Thus we never live, but merely hope to live, and since we are making ourselves ready to be blissful, it is inevitable that we will never be so...

“The sensation of the falsity [and hollowness] of the present pleasures and the ignorance of the vanity of the absent ones cause inconstancy...

“Men busy themselves chasing a ball and a hare; it is the pleasure of kings themselves...”

Later on, Pascal will remind us that players of games of chance do not want the money from the bet but the self-forgetfulness that betting provides them as it allow them to totally turn themselves toward the external world while the roulette wheel spins, and that the same thing happens to the hunter, who would not want the hare if it were given to him as a gift, because what he wants is to chase after it in order to forget what goes inside himself and elude the boredom of monotony. However, in order to gamble, the gambler has to make himself believe that it is the prize money that he wants, and in order to chase after the hare the hunter has to make himself believe that it is the hare that he wants, for otherwise he would not be able to go after it.

The fear of boredom is such that men willingly go to war in order to escape it, although later on in war they long for the peace and tranquility of home and of life in times of peace; then when the war ends, they return home to enjoy peace, but they do not find such enjoyment, for what they find is boredom once again.

The entire section called “Amusement” in Pascal’s *Thoughts* is a marvelous description of the first Noble Truth of the Buddha, which inclusively points out the second Noble Truth. Pascal writes:

“Such is our true state: it is what makes us incapable of knowing with certainty and of ignoring absolutely. We drift in this vast middle, always uncertain and floating, pushed from one extreme to the other [back and forth]. Whichever point we intend to attach ourselves and secure ourselves to, moves and abandons us, and if we follow it, it escapes our movements, slipping away from us and fleeing in an eternal flight. Nothing is fixed for us. This is the state that is natural to us, and, nevertheless, the most contrary to our inclination. The desire to find a firm seat and a final constant base to build a tower that will rise to the infinite embraces us; but our entire foundation cracks, and the earth opens to the abyss.
“Therefore, let us not look for security or steadiness...”

With respect to Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980, it may be noted that the problem of this book is that, although it is structured like a Buddhist teaching that would designate Awakening as *holon*, it negates the possibility of reaching the *holon*.

¹¹⁰ Dzogchen translations often speak of recognizing thoughts as the *dharmakaya*, of recognizing the true condition, essence or nature of thoughts, and so on. In all such cases, what the texts are referring to is *not* what normally we understand for “recognition,” which is the understanding of a pattern (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tsenpe [*mtshan-dpe*]) in terms of a delusorily valued concept. It was in order to make clear the distinction between that which the texts refer to, and what is usually termed “recognition,” that I coined the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize,” and so on.

For some time I used the terms “reCognition,” “reCognize” and so on, written with a capital C so that they could be distinguished from the terms “recognition,” “recognize” and so on. However, this was far from ideal, insofar as “reCognition” (etc.) still contained the prefix “co,” which implies the *co*-emergent arising of a subject and an object—but in what I am calling reGnition a subject and an object do not arise. (As stated in a previous note, the dualistic knowledge [*connaissance*] that is a function of the state of delusion involves the co-emergence [*co-naissance*] of subject and object [as Paul Claudel remarked, “*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l’objet*”]. Contrariwise, in what I call “reGnition” the subject-object duality dissolves like feathers entering fire.)

The neologisms “reGnition,” reGnize” and so on are far from perfect, for the prefix “re” may convey the wrong idea that a new event called “Gnition” takes place each and every time that which I am calling “reGnition” occurs (just as, each and every time there is recognition, a new cognition takes place). This is not correct because what takes place in reGnition (is) the *unveiling* of the primordial Gnosis that is the true nature of thought and in general of all mental phenomena, and which neither arises nor disappears. However, since all alternatives I considered were far more inadequate than the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on, I decided to use these neologisms (which may be translated into Spanish as “reGnoscimiento,” “reGnoscer” and so on, and into other Latin languages by the corresponding constructions.)

¹¹¹ Delusion causes us to attribute an enormous value and an enormous importance to some phenomena, a medium degree of value and importance to others, a very low one to still others, and no value or importance at all to yet others. Although nonpractitioners may think the last possibility is identical to the absence of delusory valuation-absolutization, this is incorrect, for it is an effect of delusory valuation-absolutization, relative to the different degrees of value and importance that we attribute to different phenomena, and therefore it is an instance of delusion.

¹¹² (1) The first of the three meanings of the term in the classification adopted here is the one it calls “innate beclouding of primordial awareness” (Tib. lhenkye marigpa [*lhan-skyes ma-rig-pa*] or lhenchig kyepei marigpa [*lhan-cig skyes-pa’i ma-rig-pa*])—but which in the alternative Dzogchen threefold classification of *avidya* favored by Longchen Rabjampa is called gyu dagnyi chikpai marigpa (*rgyu bdag nyid gcig pa’i ma rig pa*; cf. Longchenpa [1976, p. 24] and the great encompassing work by Cornu [2001, p. 62])—and which manifests when the contingent arising of a beclouding element of stupefaction (Tib. mongcha [*rmongs chal*]) prevents the reGnition of the shining forth of the (fivefold) gnosis that otherwise would have made patent rigpa’s own face in the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path and rigpa-*qua*-Fruit, giving rise to a beclouding of the true condition of the Base that obscures rigpa’s inherent nondual self-awareness. The initial occurrence of this type of *avidya* gives rise to the neutral (lungmaten [*lung-ma-bstan*]) condition of the base-of-all (which, according to circumstances may be called: “primordial, profound base-of-all” or yedön kunzhi [*ye-don kun-gzhi*]; “dimension of the base-of-all” or kunzhi kham [*kun-gzhi kham*]; and base-of-all carrying propensities or bagchagkyi kunzhi [*bag-chags-kyi kun-gzhi*]), which is

nonconceptual and nondual, for *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* has not yet manifested as active delusion giving rise to dualistic appearances (this being the reason why in this case the terms *avidya* and *ma-rig-pa* should not be translated as “delusion,” which, as the reader knows, is how I have translated the terms *avidya* and *ma-rig-pa* consistently in the regular text of this chapter); however, it continues to be manifest after *samsara* actively arises—when, however, it is accompanied by *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* in the second and third of the terms in the classification adopted here. (The term in the classification favored by Longchenpa is extremely difficult to translate; it seems to imply that this belouding of primordial awareness is inborn—which is no doubt the case—and that it is teleologically oriented to give rise to the illusion of single selfhood. In other words, it would be the basis for taking the true condition of reality to the a universal self, as in various Hindu schools.)

- (2) In our classification, the second type of *avidya* or marigpa is compounded of, (2a) the failure to recognize the shining forth in question as the expression of the Base and the concomitant error of taking it to be an external reality, which involves the arising of the subject-object duality, and which the alternative threefold classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa—which calls it *lhenchik kyepai marigpa* (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*. Cfr. Longchenpa [1975a, p. 51; 1976, pp. 24 and 122 note 10, taken from *Kandro Yangthik*, part III, p. 117]) and Cornu [2001, p. 62]) or spontaneous illusion—lists as the second type of *avidya* to arise, and (2b), the fully-fledged illusion of selfhood in the individual and of self-existent plurality in the world, which the alternative threefold classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa—in which it is termed *kuntu tagpai marigpa* (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*. Cfr. Longchenpa [1976, pp. 24 and 123 note 11] and Cornu [2001, p. 62])¹¹² or imaginative delusion—lists as the third type of *avidya* to arise; as the term suggests (Longchenpa favored the usage of Third Promulgation terminology in explaining the Dzogchen teachings), imaginative delusion is related to the third truth of Mahamadhyamaka; it involves the singling out of objects (which depends on the existence of a divisive, hermetic focus of awareness) within the continuum that manifested as object when spontaneous illusion occurred, and the perception of what has been singled out in terms of delusorily valued-absolutized thoughts (thus involving the confusion of the digital, fragmentary maps of thought with the analog, holistic territory of the given that such maps are incapable of matching, and the mistaken belief in the perfect correspondence of the one and the other), which gives rise to the illusion of there being a plethora of entities existing inherently, independently and disconnectedly; likewise, it involves the superimposition of the idea of an “I” on the illusory subject that is a pole of dualistic consciousness and the inherent drive to confirm that subject’s existence and gratify its acquisitiveness by means of contacts with the seemingly self-existing, seemingly external entities that are perceived at this stage. This type of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* is the confusion of categories referred to in the sentence of the regular text of this book to which the call for this note was appended, whereby the relative is taken to be absolute, the insubstantial is taken to be to be substantial, the dependent is taken to be inherently existing, and so on. This type of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* involves grasping at appearances (*phyin-ci-log-par 'dzin-pa*), and therefore comprises the manifestation of the grasped and the grasper (Tib., *gzung-'dzin*), which introduces dualistic appearances. It involves an inverted cognition insofar as the three aspects of the Base, which are *ngowo* (*ngo-bo*), *rangzhin* (*rang-bzhin*) and *thukje* (*thugs-rje*), seem to be inherently separate from each other (in fact, the phenomena manifested by the *thukje* aspect seem to be substantial rather than void, and therefore seem to have an essence different from the *ngowo* aspect, which is voidness and that is completely ignored).

Finally, in our favored classification (3) is the seal of delusion that makes it impossible to realize the illusions indicated as (2) to be such and that is the condition of possibility of the maintenance of *avidya* or marigpa in general and therefore of *samsara*. It consists in ignoring (*mishepa* [*mi-shes-pa*]) that the dualistic appearances that arise by virtue of the second type of *avidya*, are false and baseless, and in normal individuals it always accompanies this second type of *avidya*.

On the basis of the above explanation, it is easy to see that the explanation of *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* in the regular text, to which the call for this note was appended (and in general in the use of the terms throughout Part One of this book), referred to the combination of the three above meanings (the latter two of which are always underlay by the first, and in normal individuals always accompany each other). In fact, it is only when *samsara* is active (and therefore when *avidya* or *ma-rig-pa* also manifests as the second and third types), that these terms are to be translated as “delusion.”

¹¹³ As we have seen, the terms *rigpa* (*rig-pa*) and *vidya* can be understood in terms of the concepts of Base, Path and Fruit. If so understood, then marigpa (*ma-rig-pa*) and *avidya* do not refer to the negation of

rigpa/vidya qua Base (as suggested by their etymology), for qua Base rigpa/vidya cannot be destroyed or uprooted, but to (1) the nonmanifestation of rigpa/vidya qua Path and qua Fruit as a result of the activation of the unawareness of the true condition of the Base that obscures the nondual self-awareness inherent in rigpa, preventing it from making patent rigpa's own face, and (2) the manifestation of active delusion in samsara, which on the top of (1) involves the other two types of avidya or marigpa posited in the threefold classification adopted here and explained in the preceding note. (As we have seen, the Dzogchen teachings prefer to designate rigpa/vidya qua Base by other terms, such as, for example, semnyi [sems-nyid], corresponding to the Sanskrit terms chittata and chitta eva; yeshe [ye-shes], corresponding to the Sanskrit jñāna [which, however, is also used widely to refer to the Path and the Fruit]; and changchubsem [byang-chub-sems; Skt., bodhichitta]. We have also seen that, in the context of this terminology, to speak of marigpa/avidya is to speak of the nonmanifestation of rigpa/vidya qua Path and qua Fruit).

For a complete understanding of the above, it is necessary to have a good grasping of the concepts of Base, Path and Fruit as used in the Dzogchen Atiyoga, in the Tantras and in the Mahamadhyamaka school of Mahayana philosophy. An explanation of the usage of the terms in Dzogchen is provided in Part Two of this book; an explanation of the usage of the terms in Mahamadhyamaka (and of some relations between this understanding and that of Dzogchen and of the Tantras of the Path of transformation) is provided in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

However, the concept of avidya/marigpa is best known in the context of the Hinayana and the general Mahayana, which do not use the concepts of Base, Path and Fruit. This is perhaps the reason why, in the Tibetan term marigpa, the negative prefix is not the one that is used in normal categorical negation. In Guenther, Herbert V., 1984, p. 219, footnote 9 we are told that the Sanskrit term ahimsa (nonviolence) is translated into Tibetan as tsewa mepa ('tshe-ba med-pa) and that the rest of those terms that imply a categorical negation are translated by adding the term mepa. The fact that marigpa (ma-rig-pa) implies something categorically different from rigpa-mepa (rig-pa med-pa) is something that Khenpo Nülden (mKhan-po Nus-ldan) underlines in his mKhas-'jug mchan-'grel, a commentary on the mKhas-'jug by Jamgön Ju Mipham Gyamtso ('Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham rGya-mtsho). The same thing, however, does not occur with the Sanskrit term avidya, which has the same structure as ahimsa—which shows that, as will be remarked in a subsequent chapter, translations produced during the Nyingma (rNying-ma) diffusion of the Dharma are often more precise than the original texts on which they are based. (It must be noted that the text by Dr. H. V. Guenther in which this explanation is found makes the serious error of translating Dzogchen terminology with that developed by Heidegger—as if the latter had arisen as a response to Dzogchen Awakening. In multiple works, I have refuted the use of Heideggerian terminology to translate terms that are unique to the Dzogchen teaching; in particular, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols. (also see Capriles, Elías (2000b) and Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004; I also dealt with this matter in several papers and will do so again in Capriles, Elías, work in progress).

¹¹⁴ This term, which refers to the true, original condition of our cognitive capacity, which is inherently nondual, is more or less equivalent to the concept of the Base or zhi (gzhi) in the Dzogchen teachings in general, and to that of bodhichitta or changchubsem (byang-chub sems) in the Semde (sems-sde) series of Dzogchen teachings. The difference between the concept of semnyi and that of the Base is that the latter does not emphasize the cognitive aspect—which is correct insofar as the true nature of all phenomena could not be either mental or material (to the extent that everything is this true nature and there is nothing that is not contained in it, it could not correspond to one of the opposites in any duality whatsoever). However, as we have seen, the term semnyi may be considered to be a synonym of rigpa when the latter term is understood qua Base (as it was used once in the paragraph of the regular text to which the call for this note was affixed).

Here I rendered “semnyi” as “awareness” because the Tibetan term refers to our own cognitive capacity understood as the Base, and because awareness has the etymological acceptance of “being true.” When dualism and the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought arise in it, samsara manifests; when the dualism and delusory valuation-absolutization dissolve and rigpa's own face becomes fully patent in the manifestation of rigpa-qua-Path and rigpa-qua-Fruit, nirvana manifests. Among the best alternative translations would be terms such as “nature of mind” or “essence of mind,” which correspond etymologically to the Sanskrit terms as well as to the Tibetan one. Another good alternative is Base-awareness. (A neologism like “mindness” would also be quite acceptable, if it were not likely that it would be wrongly understood as referring to the verb “to mind” and thus give rise to a complete misunderstanding.) Furthermore, some prefer the translation of semnyi as Mind-as-such or as

Consciousness-as-such, but this writer considers that the etymology of this term has very little to do with those of the Sanskrit and the Tibetan words, and, much worse, does not at all correspond to the meaning of the latter: Mind-as-such logically would be understood to mean mind-*qua*-mind, which, insofar as the term mind in the Dzogchen teachings refers to the very core of delusion, is the very opposite of what the term *semnyi* refers to; in turn, Consciousness-as-such would logically be understood to mean consciousness-*qua*-consciousness, and insofar as the prefix “co” in “consciousness” implies duality, this would convey an idea that would be the very opposite of what the term *semnyi* refers to.)

Normally, it is the Sanskrit term *jñāna* and its Tibetan equivalent, *yeshe* (*ye-shes*: a word composed by the prefix *ye*, which means “primordial,” and the word *shes*, which suggests an awareness of a function of awareness) that I translate as “primordial gnosis.” This is justified insofar as the prefix *ye* in the Tibetan term *yeshe* means “primordial,” and insofar as the Sanskrit *jñāna* and the Greek *gnosis* share the same Indo-European root—and, moreover, the latter was used in some Greek traditions to refer to the cognitive event that, according to those traditions, made the absolute patent. I have also used the term *gnosis* as an alternative translation of the Tibetan word *semnyi* (*sems-nyid*), (1) because the latter contains the term *sems*, which shows that it deals with a cognitive function, but at the same time refers to the true condition of all beings (i.e., what in *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana* is designated as “absolute condition”), and (2) because the unveiling of that which the Tibetan term refers to, makes the absolute evident. (In other texts I have referred to nondual gnosis as “anoic gnosis” because when this nondual gnosis becomes evident, the mind [*noia*] *qua* root of *samsara*, which involves the noetic-noematic [subject-object] duality and the delusory valuation-absolutization at the root of this duality, does not manifest.)

¹¹⁵ I write the word “Presence” with a capital letter and add the adjective “nondual” in order to warn the reader that in this case the word is not being used in the etymological, Platonic and Heideggerian sense of “being before” (i.e., of “facing”), which implies the subject-object duality and therefore the mutual relativity of these two poles of knowledge, but in the sense of the vivid unveiling of our own primordial awareness that makes patent *rigpa*’s own face. In fact, the term that I translate as “Presence” is *rigpa*, which, as we have seen, alternatively I translate as “Awake awareness” and also as “Truth.” In an endnote to the chapter on the Path of spontaneous liberation, the difference between “Presence” and “presence,” and the function of what one and the other term refer to in the Dzogchen teachings, will be discussed.

¹¹⁶ Though sciences are widely held to discover truths, they do nothing but produce uncertain theories; as shown in Kuhn, Thomas S., 1970, in order to maintain themselves, all scientific paradigms require that scientists ignore a certain number of observed facts; when the sum of facts that it is necessary to exclude becomes too large, there arises the imperative necessity to find a new paradigm. Then for this new paradigm to maintain itself a series of facts will have to be ignored; when the sum of such facts becomes too big, a new paradigm will have to be found (and so on and on). Furthermore, the human psyche structures perception in terms of ideologically conditioned expectations; therefore, scientists tend to find what their theories require them to observe (in Gaston Bachelard, 1938, this edition 1957, we read that prejudices consisting in opinions and previous “knowledge” condition the way a researcher interprets empirical observations, becoming *epistemological obstacles* that impair his or her capacity to admit that the results obtained may fail to correspond to the *a priori* theoretical construction that caused him or her to expect a specific outcome). For these and quite a few other reasons, a series of authors (cf., for example, Wilden, Anthony, 1972; 2d Ed. 1980) have noted that scientific theories are nothing but ideologies; in their turn, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze have stated that they are *more* than ideologies: that they are an abstract machine and a generalized axiology (cf. Deleuze, Gilles, 1977, Spanish 1980). (For a more extensive discussion of this matter see Capriles, Elías, 1994; a summary of this discussion is given in a note to Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.) This applies to all sciences, including physics. And since the theories of physics are far from being objective and incontrovertible truths, we must refrain from using them as proof of the veracity of Buddhist teachings.

Nevertheless, physicists believe it has been demonstrated that, just as claimed by the *Mahayana* and other “higher” forms of Buddhism, the “physical universe” is not in itself divided: for Albert Einstein, the universe is a single energy field; for David Bohm (whose theories are far from being as widely recognized as Einstein’s), at the dimensional level of Planck’s constant the universe is an “implicate order” in which there is neither space nor time (which are indispensable for there to be separations, which in their turn are the condition for there to be separate entities); etc. In terms of Bohm’s theory, for us to perceive a spatio-temporal reality the implicate order has to be spatio-temporalized so as to produce an explicate order. Whether or not this is so, as shown in this book, once we have a spatio-temporal reality entities are

separated by our own mental functions, which recognize those forms that maintain themselves as time passes (even though, according to Einstein's Field Theory, these forms are not always made of the same "matter-energy" and, therefore, may not be regarded as substances in one of the most important Aristotelian senses of the term*). Then our mental functions associate them with concepts related to their essence, and single them out from the rest of the energy field that the universe is—in Sartrean terms, by "nihilating" their environment in order to perceive them as separate entities. (In this explanation the existence of an objective "physical" reality external to our experience was taken for granted because this is the way physics proceeds.)

In these terms, part of the delusion affecting us is related to the fact that, upon perceiving entities, we feel that they are *in themselves* separate (from us and from the rest of the single energy field), that they are *in themselves* the contents of the thoughts in terms of which we understand them ("this is a dog," "this is a house," and so on), and that *in themselves* they have a positive, negative or neutral value. It is this that makes us spin in a circle of acceptance, rejection and indifference, causing us to oscillate between *dukkha*-pervaded pleasure, pain, and *dukkha*-pervaded neutrality, and thus giving rise to *samsara*.

*This Aristotelian concept is quite logical: If an entity exchanges with its environment the matter of which it is made, then it cannot be said not to depend on anything else than itself to be what it is, for it depends on matter that presently is not part of itself in order to continue to be itself in the future. It must be kept in mind, however, that Aristotle developed different concepts of substance in different works.

¹¹⁷ According to Descartes, there was one uncreated substance, which was god, and two god-created substances, which were: (1) the soul or *res cogitans*, which was not spatial and thus did not occupy any space, and (2) the extended ("physical") universe or *res extensa*, which was the spatial reality in the midst of which the *res cogitans* found itself. This gave rise to the problem of how could two substances having so utterly different natures and constituents communicate, so that the soul would be able to perceive through the senses of the human body, move the body at will, and so on. In face of the impossibility of solving this problem, Descartes asserted that the pineal gland was the link between soul and body. However, the pineal gland is part of the *res extensa* or extended (physical) universe, and thus Descartes' "solution" did not solve anything, as it would be necessary to explain how can a nonspatial soul communicate with the spatial pineal gland (and thus we would still have the same initial problem). Obviously, the only way it could do so, would be by magical means, but this would not be acceptable to scientifically minded people.

In the *Mahayana* and the higher Buddhist vehicles, mind and body are segments of a continuum, of which the middle segment consists in the energy or voice.

¹¹⁸ Starting from Realism and Materialism, on the basis of early twenty-century physics, philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead and the Austrian Empirio-Critics (Richard Avenarius, Ernst Mach [who never met Avenarius] and Avenarius' disciple Joseph Petzoldt) came close to developing a nondual conception of reality. In particular, Avenarius stated that the single stuff of which the universe was made could not be said to be either "mental" or "physical," nor could it be considered to be a third substance different from matter and mind.

¹¹⁹ If theories of this kind were correct, then the unity of the universe revealed by twentieth century physics and universally admitted henceforth would be in fact the unity of the psychic stuff of which all entities would be made: while believing they are probing a physical universe, physicists would in truth be probing their own psyche.

¹²⁰ It is universally admitted that *definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam* (definition is made by proximate genus and specific difference), and therefore that all concepts are relative insofar as they are defined by inclusion in a wider genre that contains them (*genus proximum*) and by contrast with the most important among those concepts within the same genre that are mutually exclusive with them (*differentiam specificam*). The classical example used to illustrate this is that of the definition of human beings as "rational animals:" animal is the *genus proximum* insofar as human beings are a class within this genus; rational is the *differentiam specificam* insofar as rationality is supposedly what distinguishes human beings from other animals. If we claimed that both what we regard as physical and what we deem to be mental are made of the same stuff, this stuff would have no *differentiam specificam*; since both the terms "physical" and "mental" are defined by their mutual contrast or *differentiam specificam*, it would be utterly absurd to claim that this stuff is either physical or mental.

¹²¹ This is precisely the conclusion Avenarius reached on the basis of position (1) and of early twenty-century physics. See note before last.

¹²² This energy is the third of the aspects of what the Dzogchen teachings call the Base (Tib., zhi [g^{zhi}]): the first aspect is the essence or ngowo (*ngo-bo*), which is the voidness that allows for manifestation to occur; the second aspect is the nature or rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*), which is clarity or reflectiveness that allows for the uninterrupted process of manifestation; **and the third aspect is the energy or thukje (*thugs-rje*), consisting in the uninterrupted flow of phenomena—which, as we have seen, are a single continuum (despite the fact that in *samsara* these phenomena manifest as though they existed in two separate dimensions, one internal and the other one external).**

The single continuum consisting in the energy or thukje aspect of the Base is made up of the basic energy that the Dzogchen and Tantric teachings call thigle (*thig-le*); therefore, both the phenomena that in *samsara* we experience as internal (which, as will be shown later on, belong to the mode of manifestation of energy the Dzogchen teachings call dang [g^{dangs}]) and those that in *samsara* we experience as external (which, as will be shown later on, belong to the mode of manifestation of energy the Dzogchen teachings call tsel [r^{tsal}]) are made up of the same basic thigle energy. Later on we will see that the circulation of this energy is called lung (*rlung*), that the patterns (or “structural pathways”) of this circulation is called tsa (*rtsa*), and that these two aspects of energy are responsible for the manifestation of all phenomena. (In other words, the lung is not only the circulation of thigle through some “channels” in the human organism, and the tsa does not consist only the configuration of these “channels” in the human organism: the former includes *all* manifestations of circulating energy, and the latter includes the configurations of this circulating energy that make of the plethora of phenomena.)

This may cause one to immediately think of Einstein’s Field Theory. However, here basic energy is explicitly stated not to be a self-existing “physical” reality inherently different and separate from all that in *samsara* seems to manifest “inside ourselves” as mental phenomena: as we have seen, this continuum of energy includes both what we deem to be mental and what we deem to be physical, and upon unveiling in *nirvana* as it truly is, rather than appearing to be divided into two different dimensions, it shows itself to be a single continuum.

¹²³ In Part Two of this book the three forms of manifestation of the energy or thukje (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the Base, which arise as the play or rölpa (*rol-pa*) of the energy of the Base, will be discussed in greater detail. However, given the doubts raised by one of the readers of Part One of this book, it may be useful at this point to provide a brief explanation of how these three forms of manifestation of energy develop, of how they become the basis of *samsara*, and of how they are the means for the transcendence of *samsara* in the consolidation of *nirvana*.

The first form of manifestation of energy is dang (g^{dangs}), which is transparent, pure, clear and limpid, and therefore features no *forms* that may be perceived vividly, as we perceive the phenomena that manifest through our senses. Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu describes this energy as follows (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1996b, p. 32):

“Dang is a type of energy that is characteristic of the primordial state, the state of Contemplation, the state of Samantabhadra. In this case we are not talking about an inner or an outer dimension, of subject and object, but about the condition as it is, an authentic condition like the dharmakaya. So the example used is that of a crystal ball that is pure, clear and limpid, in which there is nothing in particular: this is our true nature... This is dang energy, the condition of dharmakaya.”

However, as we read in the terma revealed by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu titled *kLong chen 'od gsal mkha' 'gro'i snying thig las lta ba blo 'das chen po'i gnad byang bshigs*, in the process of genesis of *samsara*, “because of dualistic ignorance [and delusion], the natural dang of the Base, the innate and self-originated wisdom, is covered...” and it is this that gives rise to the eight samsaric consciousnesses. How does this happen?

After the manifestation of dang energy, the luminous forms of rölpa (*rol-pa*) energy manifest, but these do not appear to exist externally to the individual or to be in a dualistic relation to a mental subject. Though at this point dualism has not yet arisen, the manifestation of rölpa energy is the condition of possibility of the subsequent origination of tsel energy and of dualistic appearances in general. (However, the manifestation of rölpa energy is also the condition that later on, when the individual is in *samsara*, will make it possible for the dualism inherent in tsel energy to be neutralized through practices such as those of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] and the Yangthik [*yang-thig*].)

In fact, in the next stage the apparently concrete forms of tsel energy manifest, together with the illusion that these lie in a dimension or jing (*dbyings*) external to the individual—which is the basis for the subsequent manifestation of the *threefold directional apparitional structure*, and therefore for the origination of all

dualistic appearances. It is at this point that, with regard to the apparently external dimension or jing (*dbyings*) produced by the manifestation of tsel energy, dang energy—which as we have seen is neither internal nor external, for it is not dualistic—appears to constitute an internal dimension or jing. Furthermore, when the phenomena of tsel energy are reflected by dang energy in the dimmer way in which *forms* manifest in this energy, they seem to lie in this internal dimension—just as occurs when the phenomena of the “physical” world are reflected in a crystal ball, and so seem to lie inside the ball.

Furthermore, the thoughts that in *samsara* are delusorily valued—coarse, subtle or intuitive, and super-subtle (such as the directional threefold thought structure)—are not manifestations of tsel energy or of rölpa energy, but of the colorless, clear and limpid dang energy, and as such are as transparent, pure, limpid and clear as this energy. Once tsel energy arises and subsequently the three types of concepts are delusorily valued, the delusory valuation of the directional threefold thought structure causes even phenomena of the dang energy such as thoughts to be perceived dualistically, as though they were objects to a mental subject lying at a distance from the latter—and rather than being realized to be dang manifestations of the primordial state, they veil the true condition of dang energy, being taken to be self-existent concepts that either correspond to the phenomena of tsel energy (and thus are taken to be true) or fail to correspond to them (and hence are taken to be false).

It is at this point that we need a practice in order to overcome the basic delusion at the root of *samsara*. In the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings, the first level of practice is that of Tekchö or that of the Nyingthik, which consists in reGnizing thoughts as the *dharmakaya*—upon which they liberate themselves spontaneously and dang energy manifests as it always (was) in truth: as the pure, clear and limpid *dharmakaya*. This shows that such was always the true nature of the phenomena of dang energy, and puts an end to the illusion of dualism, and in particular to the illusion of there being two different dimensions, one inside and the other one outside—until the delusory valuation of thought manifests again, giving rise to dualism and to the illusion of there being two different dimensions.

When the above practice has consolidated, the practice of Thögel or that of the Yangthik must be undertaken, so that the dynamic of rölpa energy may catalyze the process of spontaneous liberation of delusion and in the long term put an end to the illusion of there being a self-existent physical world in a dimension external to the individual—which takes place upon the irreversible merging of the rölpa and tsel modes of manifestation of energy. It is only at this point that the illusion of dualism in general, and the illusion of there being two different dimensions in particular, arise no more.

¹²⁴ As noted in the regular text, this concept, which is common to the Dzogchen teachings and to the philosophical schools of the Mahayana based on the Third Promulgation (the Yogachara School, the Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara School, and the two schools of the Inner, Subtle Madhyamaka, which are the Zhentongpa and Mahamadhyamaka schools), is the one indicated by the Sanskrit terms *samaropa* and *adhyaropa* and the Tibetan term *drodok* (*sgro-'dogs*), which most translators render as “overvaluation.” I am not using this translation because, according to my Webster Dictionaries, to overvalue is “to assign an excessive or fictitious value to;” since all entities *as we experience them* are made up by our mental functions and in themselves they have neither value nor nonvalue (and also the thoughts in terms of which we experience them have neither value nor nonvalue), delusion consists in “assigning a fictitious value to phenomena,” and could by no means consist in “assigning them an excessive value”—for the latter would imply that they have some value in themselves and that we attribute them greater value than they have. It was in order to exclude the idea of “assigning an excessive value to thoughts” and circumscribe the concept to its meaning of “assigning a fictitious value to thoughts” that I chose to refer to this activity by the more specific combination of English terms “delusory valuation-absolutization of thoughts,” which makes it clear that assigning them *any* value is assigning them a *fictitious* value, and that this activity leads us to take the relative as absolute, the dependent as independent, the spurious as true, the put as given, the conditioned as unconditioned, the contingent as inherent, and so on—which, as explained in the preceding note, is the second of the senses the terms *avidya* and *marigpa* have in the threefold classification adopted here.

¹²⁵ When the emptiness of the three spheres that arise out of the delusory valuation of the directional threefold thought structure is asserted, it is referred to as *khorsum dagpa* (*'khor gsum dag pa*): purity or emptiness (*dag pa*) of the three spheres (*'khor*). In turn, the surpassing of the *threefold directional apparitional structure* is referred to by terms such as *khorsum nampar mitogpai yeshe* (*'khor gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye she*) or “primordial gnosis that does not conceive of the three spheres;” *khorsum nampar mitogpai sherab* (*'khor gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i shes rab*) or “the discriminating wisdom that does not conceive

of the three spheres;" khorsum nampar mitogpai tawa ('*khör gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i lta ba*) or the Vision that does not conceive of the three spheres;" khorsum mimigpai sherab ('*khör gsum mi dmigs pa'i shes rab*) or "discriminating wisdom that does not have the three spheres as its frame of reference;" khorsum nampar mitogpai ledang drebu ('*khör gsum rnam par mi rtog pa'i las dang 'bras bu*) or "action and fruit [of action] devoid of the concept of the three spheres;" khorsum yongdaggi drubpa chöpa ('*khör gsum yongs dag gi sgrub pa' spyod pa*) or "the accomplishing practice totally free of [the conceptual projection of the] three spheres;" '*khör gsum yongs su da pa'i gtam* or "talk totally free from the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres;" '*khör gsum mi dmigs pa de kho na nyid kyi lta ba* or "the view of thatness devoid of the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres;" '*khör gsum yang dag gi bsngo ba* or "dedication totally devoid of the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres;" etc.

It must be underlined that perception or action involving the conceptual [projection] of the three spheres is described as perceptual cognitive obscuration ('*khör gsum rnam par rtog pa gang de shes bya sgrib par 'dod*).

Finally, it may be useful to note that the term *chachai lesum* (*bya byed las gsum*), which literally means "action, agent and object" and therefore refers to the three spheres discussed above, is a grammatical term rather than a properly dharma concept. And yet sometimes this term is also used to refer to the absence of the *threefold directional apparitional structure* (for example, when the term *bya byed las gsum la rnam par rmi rtog pa* is used for referring to the absence of the conception of the three spheres *qua* action, agent and object).

Most special thanks are due to the accomplished translator and scholar Elio Guarisco for the extensive research he so kindly did on my behalf concerning the usage of this term.

¹²⁶ Though mind and mental factors or mental events, being indivisible, are not a duality, the basic delusion that gives rise to *samsara* may cause them to appear to be a duality.

Different schools list different numbers of "omnipresent" mental factors or events (i.e., those that are involved in all cognitions); however, all of them acknowledge feeling-tone (Skt. *vedana*; Tib. *tsorwa* [*tshor-ba*]); recognition (generally translated as "perception" or "conceptualization:" Skt. *samjñā*; Tib. *dushe* [*'du shes*]); impulse (Skt., *chetana*; Tib. *sempa* [*sems pa*]), which propels attention toward a potential object that then is singled out (or that propels the mind into action, etc.); attention (Skt. *manasikara*; Tib. *yila jepa* [*yid la byed pa*]); and contact (Skt. *sparsha*; Tib. *regpa* [*reg-pa*]).

Let us take the example of impulse (Skt., *chetana*; Tib. *sempa* [*sems pa*]). If I am a good Buddhist monk and I set to meditate on a statue of Shakyamuni, when I direct my attention toward the statue I get the impression that I am in control of the impulse (Skt., *chetana*; Tib. *sempa* [*sems pa*]) that sets it on the object: there seems to be a duality between mind and this mental factor or mental event, but the mind seems to be in control of it. Then a very attractive girl dressed in a mini-skirt and a see-through blouse comes into the temple as a tourist and enters the periphery of my attention. At this point impulse (Skt., *chetana*; Tib. *sempa* [*sems pa*]) automatically tends to direct my attention away from the statue of Shakyamuni and toward the girl, but since I am a good monk I struggle to keep it on the object: at the point when attention was automatically shifting toward the girl I was experiencing a duality between mind and this mental factor or mental event, but the mental factor or event was not felt to be fully under the control of the mind; contrariwise, it seemed to be behaving rather autonomously, and it almost managed to direct the mind toward the object against my wishes. However, then I managed to take control of the mental factor or event and concentrate on the statue, and therefore, though there was still the appearance of a duality between mind and the mental factor or event, again I felt the mind was in control of the mental factor or event.

In other words, I believe the *Abhidharmakosha* and other books on the mind and the mental events describe impulse (Skt., *chetana*; Tib. *sempa* [*sems pa*]) in such a way that there can be no doubt that it refers to that which impels attention toward its object, but that the wording of the descriptions is such that the event described would encompass both the fully intentional and the not-fully-intentional movements of attention toward objects. If this is so, then it is incorrect to render the Sanskrit term *chetana* and the Tibetan term *sempa* (*sems pa*) as "intention" or "volition:" they encompass intention and volition, but their meaning is wider than that of these terms.

¹²⁷ As stated in the preceding note, all Buddhist systems list recognition (Skt., *samjñā*; Tib., *dushe* [*'du-shes*]), which is often translated into English either as "conceptualization" or as "perception," among the omnipresent mental factors or mental events, which are those that occur in all cognitions. The *Abhidharmasamuchchaya* states (Guenther, Herbert V. and L. Kawamura, trans., 1975):

“What is the absolutely specific characteristic of recognition? It is to know by association. It is to see, hear, specify, and to know by way of taking up the defining characteristics (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tsenpe [*mtshan-dpe*]) [of an object] and distinguishing them.”

In turn, the *Panchaskandhaprakarana* says (Guenther, Herbert V. and L. Kawamura, trans., 1975):

“What is recognition? It is taking hold of the defining characteristics of an object.”

Some schools explain this in terms of the simile of a screen in which figures are painted, and in which the figures are made up of *conditioning reproductions of conceptions-impressions* (Skt., *vasana*; Tib., bagchag [*bag-chags*]), which is interposed between the contact of the senses with their objects, and the perceiving consciousness. In particular, according to the *Pramanavinishchaya* by Master Dharmakirti and to the schools based on this text (on which Gelugpas and Sakyapas disagree), we only know the “real object” for an instant, and immediately thereafter we perceive the image of the object that, so to say, was “photographed” on the screen in past experiences. (In Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, I compared the images of objects posited by Dharmakirti with Hume and Locke’s ideas; however, I also had to differentiate between these concepts.)

However, a “screen” could be interposed between consciousness and the potential object apprehended by my senses only if consciousness were inherently at a distance of its objects—which is not at all the case. In *samsara* there is an illusory split between consciousness and its objects that causes them to appear to be at a distance from each other, but this split is a function of what the simile represents as a “screen;” therefore, the simile is far from being precise. The point is that, if the simile of the screen is to be used, it cannot be limited to the mental factor or mental event called recognition, which allows us as subjects to identify objects, but should be applied to all three kinds of delusorily valued concepts (Skt., *vikalpa*; Tib., namtok [*rnam-rtog*]): coarse, subtle or intuitive, and *super-subtle*. Since in terms of this view the subject-object duality is also introduced by the screen, the latter could not be said to *interpose itself between the consciousness and the contact of the senses with their objects*, but would have to be said to *introduce the illusion that there is a subject and an object at a distance from each other*, and immediately thereafter to *introduce the image of the object that resulted from past experiences, and give rise to the illusion that the object is this image*.

At any rate, it is of utmost importance to distinguish between delusorily valued conceptualization (Skt., *vikalpa*; Tib., namtok [*rnam-rtog*]) and recognition (Skt., *saṃjñā*; Tib., dushe [*’du-shes*]), which is an instance of the former. Furthermore, as remarked above, it is important to keep in mind that the interpretation of conditioned perception in terms of the screen is far from being perfectly accurate and faithful to reality.

¹²⁸ This tendency and the associated pre-conceptual interest are aspects of what the Dzogchen teachings call consciousness of the base-of-all (Skt., *alayavijñāna*; Tib., kunzhi namshe [*kun-gzhi nām-shes*] or kunzhi nampar shepa [*kun-gzhi nām-par shes-pa*]), which should not be confused with the so-called “receptacle consciousness” that Third Promulgation canonical texts such as the *Lankavatara*sutra, and philosophical schools of the Mahayana such as the *Yogachara* School, the *Madhyamika-Swatantrika-Yogachara* subschool and so on, designate by the same name. An extremely brief explanation of the stages in the development of *samsara* according to the Dzogchen teachings is provided in a subsequent note; for a more detailed explanation see Part Two of this book, and also Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

¹²⁹ The Dzogchen teachings explain the arising of *samsara* within the “Base” in a greater number of steps; however, in this Part One of this book we are concerned with giving a general idea of the arising and the dynamic of delusion and *samsara*, rather than with explaining exhaustively how these come forth from an absorption in which neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* were *active*, and in which *avidya* or marigpa has only manifested in the first of the three senses the terms has in the threefold classification adopted here. In Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, as well as in Part Two of this book, I have explained sequentially according to the Dzogchen teachings the *principal* stages of the arising of *samsara* (and therefore of the second and third types of *avidya* or marigpa posited in the threefold classification adopted here) from an absorption in which neither *nirvana* nor *samsara* were *active*.

Besides, it must be noted that, although the figures we perceive are singled out in the Base by our own mind and mental factors or mental events (Skt., *chaitasika*; Tib., semjung [*sems-byung*]), they can be so separated because in the realms of middle dimensions (though not at the subatomic level) these figures conserve a continuity of form through the passing of time, which allows us to identify them as entities. This is what Plato explained in terms of articulations: even though the arm, the forearm and the hand are [parts singled out by our consciousness in] the same undivided arm and even [in] the same undivided body,

we can refer to them by different names insofar as the arm's articulations provide us with a valid reason to distinguish between them.

¹³⁰ First of all, we recognize the object in terms of an intuitive thought (i.e., of a thought that does not consist in the “mental pronunciation” of a series of words, but which consists in the mute knowledge that the segment of the continuum of sensation that has been singled out is a door, a dog, a tree, a car, etc.); immediately thereafter, it may happen that we express this recognition in terms of a discursive thought (telling ourselves mentally “this is a door,” “this is a dog,” “this is a tree,” “this is a car,” etc.). Both thoughts are delusorily valued when they manifest; however, the first to manifest is the intuitive one.

¹³¹ Of course, these thoughts have to be applicable to these aspects or “qualities”: for us to say correctly that a lemon is yellow it will have to be more or less yellow: it could not be altogether green. However, other qualities depend to a greater degree on the subjective tastes of the perceiving individual: one individual may think a salad dressing containing vinegar is delicious, while another one who detests vinegar may judge it to be really awful.

It may be noted that, since from the temporal point of view the sensory world can be seen as a process, the segments that we single out in this world and that we interpret as static substantial and subsistent entities, can be seen as segments of the “universal process”—or, more specifically, as a subprocess within a single process. In terms of this way of seeing, qualities are our interpretation, on the basis of our own judgments, of aspects of these sub-processes.

¹³² As we have seen, Shakyamuni realized that his immediate disciples in the Buddhist order were shravakas or “listeners” and thus were suited to the teachings of the *Hinayana*, but would have been frightened by the *Mahayana* teachings of the *Prajñāparamita*, which required a higher capacity and the related propensities, including greater spiritual courage, insofar as the latter teachings posited a far more thorough conception of the emptiness (Pali, *suññata*; Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., *tongpanyi* [*stong-pa nyid*]; Chinese, *wu*; Japanese, *mu*) of entities. Therefore, according to those sources, he left these teachings in the custody of the nagas, for them to be revealed over half millennium later by *Mahayana* mystic and philosopher Nagarjuna, who according to most Western scholars, around the second century AD, but according to Tibetans may have lived from 80 BC to 480 CE.

¹³³ *Mahayana* Buddhism classifies grasping (Skt., *graha*; Tib., *dzinpa* [*'dzin-pa*]) into grasping at human beings (which include the human beings we are as well as other human beings, who can cause us to experience ourselves as objects to them, causing us to feel good when they perceive us as having good qualities, or to feel bad and possibly have our subjectivity impeded when they perceive us as having bad qualities) and grasping at phenomena that are not human beings (i.e., grasping at things, which in our post-shamanic times we always experience as objects, and so there is no risk they will make us experience ourselves as objects to them, causing us to either feel good or feel bad).

When we grasp at phenomena that are not human beings, or when we grasp at another human being whom we are taking as object but who does not have the possibility to perceive us and who therefore cannot take as object, indirectly we are grasping at our own self: if I badly wish to eat that delicious, well prepared dish, I am directly grasping at the dish, and I am indirectly grasping at the supposedly true and important hungry self who wants to eat the dish.

Conversely, when we grasp at our own self, the latter is both the direct object and the indirect object of grasping: the direct object is a collection of characteristics that is supposed to be [part of] our own self (for example, our body or a part of our body, our speaking, one of our actions, etc), and the indirect object is our consciousness, equally supposed to be [part of] our own self.

In Madhyamika terms, grasping at human beings and grasping at phenomena that are not human beings implies taking both ourselves and the objects of our grasping as being self-existing entities. As part of the remedy against the evils of grasping, the subschools of Madhyamaka posited the selflessness or emptiness of human beings and the absence of an independent self-nature or emptiness of those phenomena that are not human beings, each of which, as stated in an earlier note, was in its turn divided into coarse one and a subtle one. The explanation of these was given in that note.

¹³⁴ Fragment 2 of Heraclitus according to Diels & Kranz, 23 according to Marcovich (cf. Marcovich, M., 1967, and Marcovich, M., 1968.) The Spanish translation that here was translated into English is based on the one given in Kirk, G.S., and J. E. Raven, 1966, Spanish 1970. Instead of “particular intelligence,” A. Cappelletti has “particular understanding” (Cappelletti, Angel J., 1972; cf. also: Cappelletti, Angel J., 1969), while Diels gives us “private understanding.”

As I have remarked in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols. and in a series of other works, Heraclitus referred to *avidya* or *marigpa* (*ma-rig-pa*) by the Greek term *lethe*, meaning “concealment” or “veiling,” and referred to what might have been the unveiling of the true nature of reality in the manifestation of *vidya* or *rigpa* (*rig-pa*), by the term *aletheia*, which means “unveiling.” (It is clear that the term “concealment” applies more precisely to the first of the three types of *avidya* or *marigpa* posited in the threefold classification adopted here, which as we have seen is that of unawareness of the true nature of the Base rather than of active delusion; however, it probably encompassed all three types.)

¹³⁵ The reasons why Hume refuted the supposed substantiality of the “I” were radically different from the ones that led Shakyamuni Buddha and a series of Buddhist philosophers to do likewise, but also were very different from those behind similar attempts by Western philosophers other than Hume.

In fact, the latter’s attempt to show substantiality to be a mere fiction was a consequence of his empiricism, according to which sense impressions necessarily had to be the direct or indirect basis of all knowledge: since the impression of substance did not exist, for it was simply impossible that there be such an impression, substance necessarily had to be a fiction produced by the human mind, and so there was no reality whatsoever that could be referred to as substance. Furthermore, to Hume each and every different object, and every object consisting of parts, is distinguishable, and all that is distinguishable is separable. He concludes (Hume, David, this ed., 1978, Part I, sec. VI, p. 16):

“We have therefore no idea of substance, distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it... The idea of substance, ...is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned them, by which we are able to recall, either to ourselves or others, that collection.”

Hume offers us a nominalistic solution to the problem of substance. In fact, the word “substance” is nothing but a name that is applied to a *bundle* or collection of qualities, for there is nothing that be the support of those qualities or that may contain those qualities: all there is, is the collection of particular qualities and nothing else.

Hume regards the problem of the identity of the “self” or “I” as a special case of the problem of the identity of substance, quite different from that of the supposed substance of the entities appearing as object. In fact, in Hume, David, this ed., 1978, IV, V, he argues that the illusion that the “self” or “I” is substantial doesn’t derive from a sense impression, from the association of a series of impressions, or from the association of a series of ideas derived from previous impressions, for there is not even an impression or series of impressions that may correspond to the “self,” “I,” or “personal identity.” Therefore, the substantiality of this “self,” “I,” or “personal identity” should be considered to be even more fictitious than that of the entities that appear as object (for this to be correctly understood, we must keep in mind that he was not identifying the “I” with the sum of mind, voice, body, qualities and activities [for there can be no doubt that there are impressions corresponding to the voice, body, qualities and activities], but he was taking it to correspond to the mind understood as a substance and thought to be our innermost identity).

To conclude, Hume did not assert the absolute nonexistence of all instances of the “I,” what he did was to assert that the “I”—whether it be conceived as a metaphysical, psychological or epistemological entity—is not at all substantial, and to deny the existence of an “I” that be simple and identical with itself, or identical throughout the whole of its manifestations. He stated that, upon entering what we call “I,” he always found one or another particular perception, and hence concluded that the “I” was nothing but a series of perceptions linked by associations.

Though Hume’s reasons for denying the substantiality of the “I” or “self” are different from those that led both Shakyamuni Buddha and Heraclitus to do likewise, at first sight the conception of the “I” as a *bundle* may seem somehow similar to the Buddhist explanation of it as an illusion produced by the interaction of aggregates (*skandha*). Hume tells us, in fact, that despite the fact that the so-called “selves” *...are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement...* we imagine that there must be a support for these impressions which be different from them and that may remain identical to itself under all of them: a soul or a mental “I” *qua* underlying substance. Furthermore, insofar as Hume negated that any of these impressions responded to a substance, his conception was not that far from the *Mahayana* view according to which the *skandhas* are as insubstantial as the illusion of an “I” that appears as a result of their interaction.

Like Hume, Nietzsche rejected the supposed substantiality of the “I.” However, unlike Hume, he did not elaborate an encompassing theory in order to explain its insubstantiality, which he admitted insofar as it

was implicit in the Dionysian religion, to which in theory he adhered—even though I am of the opinion that he contradicted it with his practice.

- ¹³⁶ Lichtenberg asserted that to argue from sensations to an ego, self or soul as their bearer, as Descartes did, was not logically warranted, and in this regard insisted that to say *cogito* was to say too much, for as soon as it was translated into “I think” it seemed necessary to postulate an ego, self or soul. And in fact the crux of Descartes’ error was precisely that he was trying to prove that the fact that there was thinking demonstrated the existence of a thinking ego, self or soul.

In *Aphorismen, nach den Handschriften* (Lichtenberg, Georg Christoph, 1902/1908, Spanish 1989/1995, section “Causes,” p. 214) the idea we are concerned with is expressed roughly as follows:

“One should not say ‘I think’: one thinks like the sky flashes lightening.”

In turn, Koyré’s book (in the index of which the statement is attributed to James K. Lichtenberg rather than to Georg Christoph Lichtenberg) expresses the idea we are concerned with as follows (Koyré, Alexandre, 1973, p. 17; cited in Capriles, Elías, 1994.):

“It would be better to use an impersonal formula and, rather than saying *I think*, say “it thinks in me.”

Thus expressed, the statement would be far less precise than Heraclitus’. The point is that thinking is a *function of* the single nature of all entities rather than being a function of a supposedly separate, autonomous soul or mind, and that thoughts are *made up of* the single nature of all entities. So it is correct to say that it is not the limited “I” (i.e., that which deluded beings wrongly consider to be their true identity) that thinks. However, that which thinks is not something other to ourselves (as Koyré’s wording of Lichtenberg’s statement seem to imply), but our true nature, and this nature does not think “in the I” (i.e., in the limited “I” that deluded beings wrongly consider to be their true identity), but in its own sphere, which encompasses everything. In Buddhist terms, thoughts are data of the sixth sense, which presents them to the mind (so to say) so that it may experience them.

We cannot be absolutely sure of the original form of Lichtenberg’s statements because by the time Albert Leitzmann edited *Aphorismen, nach den Handschriften*, many of the notes by Lichtenberg, which were extant when the *Vermischte Schriften* were edited between 1800 and 1803, had been lost.

- ¹³⁷ These verses by the Mexican Nobel Prize awarded poet correctly implies that Descartes’ intuition was delusive, for there is no separate “I” who thinks the thoughts: this “I” is an illusion produced by the thinking process, and this illusion is somehow like the shadow of the words that follow each other in discursive thinking (insofar as the mental subject appears “indirectly and implicitly” in both cognitions and actions).

- ¹³⁸ Seventeenth-Century philosopher Blaise Pascal (posthumous edition, 1669; Spanish translation, 1977) presented all human attempts to elude boredom and uneasiness as movements away from authenticity. Nineteenth-Century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard, Søren, trans. Walter Lowry, this ed. 1957, 3d impression 1970; Kierkegaard, Søren, trans. W. Lowry, this ed. 1954) viewed similarly all our attempts to flee *Angst* (essential anguish/dread). Then, in the Twentieth Century, Existential and Existentialist philosophers equated authenticity with facing anguish: the former would lie in ceasing to “flee” (so to say, for in this context the term cannot be taken literally) the naked experience of *being-in-relation-to-death* (Heidegger, Martin, 1927; Spanish translation 1951; revised and including translator’s note 1971; § 45-53), the naked experience of the anguish that the being of the human individual is (Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980), etc. In Sartre’s words, the being of the human individual is anguish, and as such it reveals itself in the experience of anguish—as well as in others such as boredom, uneasiness, nausea.

Sartre (*ibidem*) distinguished between fear and anguish, noting that the former is fear that something undesirable may happen, and the latter is fear that our own actions may cause something undesirable. Experiments in the lab have proven the validity of this distinction, as they have shown that rats develop ulcers and cardio-vascular illnesses when subject to consistent punishments that depend on their own decisions, but do not develop the same illnesses when subject to consistent punishments that do not depend on their own decisions.

For a more detailed consideration of all of the above, see Capriles, Elías, 1977; Capriles, Elías, 1986; Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

(In the East, thousands of years ago Buddhist traditions asserted that, in order to move from *samsara* to *nirvana*, it was essential to train in awareness of the myriad sufferings and shortcomings of *samsara*—the all-pervasiveness and constancy of *dukkha* or “unhappy consciousness,” the certainty of old age, illness and death, and so on—and suggested that eluding awareness of these sufferings and shortcomings

represented a movement away from authenticity. However, they never suggested that one should remain anguished or unhappy forever: anguish was merely the springboard from which it was possible to go beyond the illusion of being, into Awakening. In the West of Antiquity, both pre-Christian and Christian thinkers and ascetics insisted in the need to face the experiences that most human beings automatically flee; among the former, this was an outstanding part of the theory and praxis of Diogenes of Sinope and the Cynics, as well as of other individuals and schools; among the latter, this was done by desert anchorites and many other early religious men. However, in this case the idea also was not to remain in a state of anguish and unhappiness, but to use anguish go beyond anguish and beyond normal human experience.)

¹³⁹ As explained in Part Two of this book, the Tibetan term “Dzogchen” (*rdzogs-chen*) is the contraction of “dzogpa chenpo” (*rdzogs-pa chen-po*). “Dzogpa” means “full,” “complete” or “perfect” (for example, a glass of water full to the brim is “dzogpa,” but the same applies to an action that has been perfectly carried out). Although “chenpo” is generally translated as “great,” Dzogchen Master Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche has remarked that, in the compound term “Dzogchen,” “chenpo” does not have a relative meaning, such as that of the word “great,” which can refer to something greater or less great, but an absolute meaning, such as that of the word “total.” It is because of this that I have translated the word “Dzogchen” as “total plenitude / completeness and perfection.” It is important to note that in this translation the terms “plenitude / completeness” respond to the *katak* [*ka-dag*] aspect of what is designated by the term dzogpa, whereas the term “perfection” responds to its *lhundrub* [*lhun-grub*] aspect. (In fact, the *katak* aspect of the Base is its emptiness, corresponding to the lack of self-existence both of the totality of the Base [see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004] and of all entities that may be singled out within it, and the direct realization of this lack of self-existence puts an end to the basic human illusion that consists in experiencing oneself as being at a distance from the continuum of sensa; therefore, it brings to a halt the lack of plenitude and completeness that issued from this illusion—so that the realization of the *katak* aspect of the Base corresponds to the realization of absolute completeness and plenitude. The symbolic representation of emptiness is perfectly consistent with this fact: it consists in the color white, which is the sum of all colors, rather than in the color black, which is the lack of all colors.)

¹⁴⁰ In Tarthang Tulku, 1977a, there is reference to a condition of “Great Space-Time-Knowledge.” However, in this case, just like in the one discussed in the preceding note, the Tibetan term “chenpo” has an absolute rather than a relative meaning, and therefore I translated it as “Total.” In my turn, with regard to this Total condition I spoke of “Space-Time-Awareness” rather than of “Space-Time-Knowledge” because in some European languages the latter’s etymology implies dualism: as poet Paul Claudel pointed out in his *Traité de la Co-naissance au monde et de soi-même* (in Claudel [1943]), “knowledge” (*connaissance*) is the co-emergence (*co-naissance*) of subject and object (“*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l’objet*”)—and in fact the term designates the dualistic cognitive function of the state of *avidya* or marigpa as the active delusion that manifests in *samsara*, which involves the illusory subject-object duality. (In English, the term “knowledge” does not have a dualistic etymology, for it begins with the letters “kn” rather than with the prefix “co”—and the former might as well derive from the Greek combination of letters “gn,” as present in the term “gnosis.”)

¹⁴¹ Descartes chose the pineal gland as the point of communication of the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* because it was roughly where this gland lies that he had the impression that the mental subject had its seat.

¹⁴² “Oneself,” “himself” and “herself” refer to the whole person; here I am referring to the mental subject, which I call “it” insofar as it has no sex or gender.

¹⁴³ The attempt to achieve virtue issues from awareness that we have nonvirtuous drives, rather than giving rise to these drives. However, at the same time it confirms and potentiates the drives that this attempt is meant to check.

Alan Watts compared human virtue to the healing virtue of a plant: either the plant has the curative virtue or does not have it; if it possesses it, it is not necessary to do anything for the virtue to manifest; if it does not have it, no matter what one might do, it will not develop it. Watts pointed out that the sense of the Chinese word *te* in the title of the *Tao-Te-Ching* is similar to that of the English word “virtue” in the preceding example. Nevertheless, in this case virtue depends, not on the fact that the true condition of ourselves and all other entities (is) the Tao, but on the Tao’s unveiling. In fact, when the basic human delusion called *avidya* or marigpa conceals the Tao (i.e., when it manifests in the first of the three senses the term has in the threefold classification adopted here), and then gives rise to the illusion of selfhood (i.e., when it manifests in the second and third senses the term has in the threefold classification adopted here), we are possessed by selfishness and become subject to the law of inverted effect that will be considered below in

the regular text. Since these impede the flow of the virtue inherent to the Tao, nothing that we may do to generate the virtue inherent to it will make it manifest. Conversely, when the Tao unveils, the virtue inherent to it manifests spontaneously. (Although the most ancient known version of the *Tao-Te-Ching* is the one discovered in Ma-Wang-Tui, titled *Te-tao Ching* [Lao-tzu, English 1989; Lao-Zi, Spanish 1996], Thomas Cleary [Cleary, Thomas, 1991]) may be right when he says that said version, which is arranged differently than the traditional one and is more extensive than the latter, was a courtly adaptation of the original.)

¹⁴⁴ The institutions of justice themselves have prompted this. Cf. Foucault, Michel, 1975, Spanish 1976.

¹⁴⁵ For a more extensive analysis of the mechanics that makes us distance ourselves from virtue as we try to possess it, and exacerbate evil by trying to destroy it, cf. Capriles, Elías, 1994. The topic is dealt with in the third essay of the book, called “Teoría del valor. Crónica de una caída” (cf. in particular the section on Ethical Value). Cf. also Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols.. In a nutshell, the essence of this mechanics may be abridged as follows:

It is well-known that one of the most powerful roots of evil is our perception of certain human traits and tendencies as evil and the hatred towards these traits and tendencies that ensues—which causes us to negate them in ourselves by seeing them as the innermost identity of some others, and to hate them *in* and *as* those others. Jung explained this in terms of his concept of the “shadow,” which I believe that, in terms of the distinction of two kinds of fantasy allegedly introduced by Melanie Klein in an article written by Susan Isaacs, is unconscious phantasy (Isaacs expressed this distinction in terms of different spellings of the term: with an “f” in the case of “conscious *fantasy*,” and with “ph” in that of “unconscious *phantasy*,” cf. Isaacs, Susan, 1943, this folder Ed., 1989; Laing, Ronald D., 1961/1969; Hinshelwood, Robert D., 1991). Evil is potentiated by our hatred of those on whom we project it, and particularly by our attempts to punish or destroy evil by punishing or destroying those others.

Now, how do the shadow and our unconscious phantasies arise? This subject was discussed to some detail in Capriles, 1977 and Capriles 1986, and it is retaken, more briefly but with greater accuracy, in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

¹⁴⁶ This will be so, provided that we have gone beyond the stage or merely learning the activity we are carrying out. As Gregory Bateson noted (Bateson, Gregory 1972), one who is learning a new activity needs to concentrate the whole of his or her attention on it; once learning has been accomplished, the individual will have the capacity to carry out the activity automatically, while his or her attention occupies itself with other matters. However, in the case of the individual in *samsara* possessed by basic human delusion, at some point circumstances can cause self-conscious attention to enter into play, which may impede his or her performance. This is not so in the case of a fully Awake one, for the propensities for delusorily valued dualism to affect the individual have been fully neutralized.

¹⁴⁷ The root of this term (*khora*) literally means “wheel.”

¹⁴⁸ Among other things, it is insofar as we perceive what is unoriginated, unmade and uncompounded as being originated, made and compounded, that many of us justify the widespread belief in a creator of the universe. There are many other reasons for the *arising* of this belief, which were partly discussed in Capriles, Elías, 2000b and which will be discussed in greater detail in the upcoming, revised edition of Capriles, Elías, 1994. At any rate, this is not the place to discuss this matter in depth.

¹⁴⁹ As explained in a previous note, the reason why I had to coin the neologism “reGnition” in order to refer to an occurrence that in the English translations of Dzogchen texts is often called “recognition,” was precisely that this occurrence does *not* involve the mental event called “recognition” (Skt., *samjñā*; Tib., *du-shes*). Contrariwise, that occurrence represents the very surpassing of recognition in the patency of nondual Awake awareness’ own face that is the manifestation of *rigpa-qua-Path* and *rigpa-qua-Fruit*.

¹⁵⁰ One of the first authors to deal with this law was Lao-tzu, in his *Tao-Te-Ching*. I myself dealt with it in Capriles, Elías, 1989 (restricted circulation booklet). Later on the nonrestricted parts of the booklet were refined into Capriles, Elías, 2001, and then were even further refined into the Appendix “Loops from *The Source of Danger is Fear*” to Elías Capriles, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

With respect to Watts, it may be noted that inaccuracies and even some in depth errors are found in his work that may even have led some along false paths. By way of example: in *The Joyous Cosmology*, Watts went so far as to declare that psychedelic drugs could *produce* the state of Awakening that *Ch’an* or *Zen* and other “paths of liberation” of the East pursue—which is an extremely grave error insofar as the essential characteristic of this state is that, being *unconditioned*, it cannot be *produced*. Such assertions lent

momentum to the psychedelic hedonism that characterized the hippies in the decade of the 1960's and which, in spite of having inspired some to seek for genuine spiritual paths, in an immediate, direct way also gave rise to psychoses and suicides, and in a mediate, indirect way, produced a conservative and repressive dialectical reaction that manifested in the boom of spiritual groups based on dominion, manipulation and deception, in the popularization of highly toxic, physiologically and/or psychologically addictive, illegal ego-enhancing drugs, and in a political reaction to the far right. Therefore, that hedonism is something that young people who aspire to transform their consciousness and society ought to avoid.

Nevertheless, Watts played an inestimable role in the education and inspiration of a good part of those members of this writer's generation who later undertook one or another of the Buddhist paths. In particular, I deem *The Wisdom of Insecurity* to be one of the best books on spiritual matters ever written by a Westerner.

¹⁵¹ I think it is advisable not to try to predict exactly when would the disintegration of human society or the end of human life on our planet take place if current trends were sustained. According to what seem to be the soundest interpretations of the prophecies related to the *Kalachakra Tantra*, we are still quite a few decades away from the Kalachakra wars, and so these prophecies seem to foresee that human society will not disintegrate, and that human life will not come to an end, during the 21st century. Contrariwise, they foretell the advent of a millennium of Awakening, harmony and peace.

The fact that scientific predictions have rarely been fulfilled with precision, is show by the ones made in *The Ecologist* Editing Team, 1971, which was supported in a document by many of the most notable scientists of the United Kingdom and by organizations such as The Conservation Society, the Henry Doubleday Research Association, The Soil Association, Survival International, and Friends of the Earth. The authors asserted that:

“An examination of the relevant attainable information has made us conscious of the extreme gravity of the global situation in our days. However, if we allow prevailing tendencies to persist, the rupture of society and the irreversible destruction of the systems that sustain life on this planet, possibly towards the end of the [twentieth] century, doubtlessly within the lifetimes of our children, will be inevitable.”

The same applies to the predictions by Michel Bosquet (in Senent, J., Saint-Marc, P. and others, 1973), who warned about three decades ago that:

“Humankind needed thirty centuries to gather momentum; there are thirty years left to brake before the abyss.”

More pondered, but perhaps still too tight in his dating, German-Ecuadorian ecologist Arthur Eichler pointed out in the late 1980s that it would have been an exaggeration to predict the total destruction of the systems that sustain life in the twentieth century, but also asserted that only a total *immediate* transformation might *perhaps* make our survival possible beyond the first half of the present century (personal communication).

On his part, Lester Brown, from the Worldwatch Institute in Washington, D.C. (Brown, Lester, 1990), may have also been too precise in his predictions when he asserted at the Global Forum on the Environment and Development for Survival that took place in Moscow from January 15-19, 1990 that:

“If we cannot turn around some of the prevailing tendencies in the future, we run the very real risk that environmental degradation may produce economic ruin, as it has already done in parts of Africa, and that the two may begin to feed upon each other, making any future progress extremely difficult... ..by the year 2030, we will either have produced an environmentally sustainable world economic system or we will have clearly failed and, much before that, environmental degradation and economic ruin, feeding upon each other, will have led to social disintegration. We will do it by 2030 or we will have clearly failed.”

Without announcing a “date of doom,” in 1998, a group of scientists comprising many of the Nobel prize winners of the planet warned against the irreversible destabilization and destruction of the ecosystem through the greenhouse effect—which since 1997 and during 1998 produced the most extreme phenomenon “El Niño” ever recorded in history, which wreaked havoc around the world. Even James Lovelock, who previously had made fun of ecologists, pointed out that Gaia (the planet considered as a living organism) would be incapable of maintaining its homeostasis (health) and its life with an index of human incidence upon its systems such as the one that has characterized recent years and decades.

Though I refuse to make predictions concerning the time at which, if no radical change is achieved, society may be disrupted or humankind destroyed, there is no doubt that the results of our scientific-technological project threaten the continuity of human society and life. Therefore it is imperative that we begin working right now toward the spiritual, psychological, epistemological, technological, social, economic and cultural changes that are the condition of possibility of long term survival: only thus will possibly come true the

predictions in the *Kalachakra Tantra*, according to which after the final wars of *Kalachakra* humankind will enjoy a millennium of peace and spiritual fulfillment.

¹⁵² Buddhism does not claim that a god created the world in order to fulfill a preconceived purpose. Since the question as to how the world originated and how life manifested is irrelevant from the standpoint of attaining Liberation or Awakening, Shakyamuni remained silent when asked about it (just as he did when asked about other thirteen topics). Furthermore, the question concerning the meaning of life only arises from the standpoint of dualistic delusion, as the latter causes us to feel that we are thrown into a world against our will and forced to have experiences in it, and then makes us ask what the meaning of being so thrown and so forced is. However, upon Awakening we realize a Meaning that is inexpressible and unthinkable: as we are no longer caught within the boundaries of the dualism of self and other, person and world, experience and recipient of experience, etc., the flow of Time (which I capitalize insofar as here I am referring to it in the context of Total Time-Space-Gnosis-Awareness) is itself nondual Meaning that makes it absurd for the Awake individual to ask questions concerning the purpose or meaning of life. In fact, we (are) what is happening, and when we do not feel different from it, what is happening is absolute, nonconceptual Meaning.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that *samsara* and *nirvana* are two functionings of the single Base or zhi (*gzhi*) referred to in the Dzogchen teachings, and that both manifest from the same source. In the *Kunche Gyälpo*, Samantabhadra, the state of *dharmakaya*, says (Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 94):

“There is nobody apart from me who has created dualism.”

As Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has noted (*ibidem*), this does not mean that Samantabhadra has concretely done something; all it means is that nothing exists apart from the state of the individual. In other words, there is nothing apart from our true nature that may have created the world and ourselves, or that may have given rise to *samsara*, or that may continue to maintain *samsara* at every instant. And yet this does not mean that our own true condition has actively created and maintained these things. At any rate, this understanding is behind the myth of *lila* (Tib., *rölpa* [*rol-pa*]), which represents the universe as a hide-and-seek play of universal awareness (in Hinduism represented as the god Shiva) with itself, and which is intended to provide a symbolic idea of the manifestation of experience and of the arising of *samsara* to children and child-like people.

However, in truth *samsara* arises again and again in our experience (in a way that was described both in Part Two of this book and in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004), and thus this question does not refer to something that happened long ago, but to something that constantly happens again and again as time goes on.

At any rate, there being no duality the moment just before the occultation of the true condition of reality and the subsequent arising of *samsara*, it is impossible that at that moment there be an intention, and hence that there be a “reason” for this occultation to occur; therefore, we cannot say that the occultation took place for this or that reason. In fact, the illusion of duality that is the core of *samsara* arises nondually. If, after being possessed by the illusion of duality, we are fortunate enough as to reGnize rigpa and thereby apprehend nondually what at some point had seemed to be a duality, we come to realize the “meaning beyond words” referred to above.

Though we cannot say *why* *samsara* arises, we can say *how* it arises: this is what the Dzogchen teachings do when they explain the successive arising of kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) as basic ignorance concerning the true condition of the Base or zhi (*gzhi*), of kunzhi namshe (*kun-gzhi nam-shes*) as a readiness to know the forms that may be singled out in the continuum of sensation that manifests in the state of kunzhi, of nyönmongpachen yikyi namshe (*nyong-mongs-pa-can yid-kyi nam-shes*) as the active core of the passions that are the essence of the realm of sensuality, and of the six sensory consciousnesses as the actual functioning of this realm of *samsara*. For a detailed explanation of this, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, and also Part Two of this book.

¹⁵³ In Guenther, Herbert V., 1984, we are told the tale of the men and the elephant is an ancient Indian story. As remarked in the regular text, to the knowledge of this author it first appeared in written form in the *Tathagatagarbhasutra*. Later, it reappeared in Islamic countries, in texts by the Sufi poets; for example, according to the *Hadiqah* by Sana’i, just like in the original *sutra*, the men were blind, while in Rumi’s *Mathnavi* (written centuries after the *Hadiqah*) they had no vision problems, but were in the dark. It must be noted, however, that the fifth man, who mistook the tail for a snake, is not featured in the Sufi version of the story; in fact, it was the author of this book that incorporated him into the tale.

Recently, the story has been told in Dudjom Rinpoche (English 1991, vol. I, p. 295), in Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's oral teachings, in texts dealing with systems theory and also in previous works by the author of this book (cf. Capriles, Elías, 1986; Capriles, Elías, 1988; Capriles, Elías 1994; etc.).

¹⁵⁴ This example was used by Alan Watts, from whom I have often borrowed it. Unfortunately I do not remember in which of Watts' books it was used.

¹⁵⁵ There is a direct relation between the ampleness or narrowness of an individual's space-time-knowledge and what Tantrism designates as "energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness" (*kundalini* or *thig-le*: a concept that will be explained in a note the first time the term is used in the regular text, and that will be considered in far greater detail in the context of the discussion of the *mandala* in Part Three of this book)—so much so, that Total Space-Time-Awareness corresponds to what the Dzogchen teachings call "thigle chenpo" or Total Thigle (in the sense of the Sanskrit term *kundalini*, which I translate as "energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness") *qua* Fruit—which is exactly the same as Dzogchen *qua* Fruit. (As stated elsewhere in this Part One of *Buddhism and Dzogchen*, the Tibetan term thigle translates both the Sanskrit word *bindu* and the Sanskrit noun *kundalini*, and therefore "total thigle" means both "total sphere" [i.e., total *bindu*] and "total energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness" [i.e., total *kundalini*].)

It may be useful to relate the Dzogchen term "total sphere" to the statement by Saint Bonaventura ("the Seraphic Doctor") that was later reproduced by Blaise Pascal, and which physicist Alain Aspect repeated after his experiments of 1982 at the University of Paris-Sud:

"The universe is an infinite sphere the center of which is everywhere and the periphery of which is nowhere."

¹⁵⁶ The Age of Truth (*satyayuga*) or Era of Perfection (*kritayuga*), when the spontaneous plenitude and perfection of the primordial order prevailed, corresponds to what the Bible called Eden and to what in Persia and Greece was named Golden Age. (The initial, most complete and perfect manifestation of this condition consists in what pre-Aryan Persians called Zurvan—absolute Space and absolute Time—and that pre-Aryan Indians called Shiva Mahakala or "Total Time:" the condition of Total Space-Time-Awareness that has already been considered.) With the Indo-European invasions the concept of an initial (and final) era of Truth and Perfection was lost in Greece, but at some point Hesiod reintroduced it from Persia, and centuries later it became central to the Stoics, who revived the characterization of that period as being previous to the arising of the State, government, property or the exclusive family. In Tibet, the Bön tradition of Tibet also referred to it as a period in which property and other restrictions proper to civilization were still nonexistent (Reynolds, John, 1989a). In China, Taoist sages referred to it as the Age when the Tao prevailed and the authenticity of the uncut trunk was embraced; its social and political aspects were discussed mainly in the *Huainanzi* (Masters from Huainan/Thomas Cleary, 1990). And so on.

The idea that it was the development of essential delusion that produced the progressive degeneration of humankind manifesting in the succession of ever more degenerate ages or eras might have been part of Heraclitus' thought, insofar as the Ephesian sage used the concepts of *lethe* and *aletheia* in a way that seems to correspond to the use of *avidya* and *vidya* in Buddhism, and used the term *aion* [aeon] as well—according to Diogenes Laërtius [L, IV, 9], precisely in the context of the conception of temporality and degenerative evolution that we are concerned with here. However, that idea is not explicitly expressed in any known *extant* document produced by Hesiod, Heraclitus, the Stoics, or any other Greek individual or school of thought. The same applies to the idea that the progressive development of delusion involves the gradual acceleration of the vibratory activity of the human organism at the root of delusory valuation, which results in an acceleration of the experience of time, and to the idea that the *Kaliyuga* or Dark Age (the Age of Degeneration at the end of the cycle) comes to an end when, vibratory rates having reached a threshold, they collapse and as a result of this both time and human delusion come to an end: this conception is expressed in Padmasambhava and others, 1973.

For my own interpretation of the cyclic conception of time, corruption and regeneration in terms of the development of the basic delusion, and my explanation of how ecological crisis represents the *reductio ad absurdum* of this delusion, which may allow its surpassing, see Capriles, Elías, 1994, Second Essay.

¹⁵⁷ It is clear that if the implementation of a thesis-project gives rise to practical consequences that contradict the aims inherent in the thesis-project, the latter has achieved its *reductio ad absurdum*. However, in the case of the technological project of domination of all that we see as other with regard to ourselves, it is not only the thesis-project at its root that completes its *reductio ad absurdum* when the implementation of the project gives rise to the ecological crisis that seems to be about to disrupt human society and eventually wipe out human life from the face of the earth: what completes its *reductio ad absurdum* is mainly the

basic delusion that, upon developing to a certain degree, gave rise to the technological thesis-project of domination. In fact, this project is but a late product of the development of delusion throughout the cosmic cycle (aeon or *kalpa*), which by reducing delusion to absurdity, allows for its eradication at the level of the species (or at least at the level of those members of the species who survive), and thereby may allow the end of the cycle and the beginning of a new one—the first stage of which would be a new Golden Age, *satyayuga* or *kritayuga*. In this regard, see Capriles, Elías, 1994.

¹⁵⁸ In Pascal, Blaise, posthumous edition, 1669, Spanish translation, 1977, the second Noble Truth is correctly described, and just as in the story of the maddening water, is compared to a psychological disturbance (the French philosopher-mathematician-optician did not use the name “Noble Truth,” nor did he refer to Buddhism, which in his time was reputedly unknown in France.)

¹⁵⁹ So long as Total Space-Time-Awareness is veiled by space-time-knowledge (no matter whether the latter be narrower or wider), a directional consciousness observes, judges and controls behavior. And so long as a directional consciousness observes, judges and controls behavior, to some degree one is subject to the impeded-centipede effect.

¹⁶⁰ The Pali term *sankhata*, the Sanskrit term *samskrita* and the Tibetan term *düje* (*’dus-byas*)—the negations of which are, respectively, *asankhata*, *asamskrita* and *dümaje* (*’dus-ma-byas*)—mean “composed,” “made up,” “configured” or “intentionally contrived.” In general Buddhism, the words refer to the principal characteristic of phenomenal entities in their totality, which are mutually conditioned and interrelated (as shown by the doctrine of *pratitya samutpada* or interdependent origination in all its interpretations, from that of the succession in the time of the twelve *nidana* or links, to that of the *Prajñāparamita* sutras, which does not understand it as temporal succession but as the essential, synchronous dependence of all entities with regard to each other). However, the acceptations of “made up” and “intentionally contrived” should not be taken to mean that Buddhism asserts that a god or demiurge created them with a purpose: the conception of a god or demiurge is extraneous to Buddhism.

Since everything conditioned has a beginning and an end, in the *Hinayana* conditioning is the sign of impermanence (lists of what is conditioned and what is unconditioned to the philosophical schools that were traditionally taught in Tibet are provided in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004; some of those lists are reproduced in the following notes).

¹⁶¹ For example, according to the *Vaibhashika* School, the unmade, unconditioned and uncompounded (*asamskrita*) phenomena are: (1) *akasha* or space; (2) *apratisamkhyanirodha* or nonperception of phenomena due to the absence of *pratyaya* or conditions and resulting from concentration (rather than from perfect insight issuing from discrimination); and (3) *pratisamkhyanirodha* or supreme wisdom of cessation resulting from perfect insight issuing from discrimination.

According to the *Yogachara* School, there are six unconditioned phenomena or *asamskrita dharma*, which will be considered in the immediately following note. The *Mahasanghika* School went further and posited nine categories of *asamskrita dharma*.

For a short yet relatively in-depth discussion of the four philosophical schools of the *Sutrayana* that are included in Tibetan *curricula*, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

¹⁶² The philosophical schools of the *Mahayana* are not unanimous as to what is conditioned and what is unconditioned. The *Yogacharas* posited six unconditioned phenomena or *asamskrita dharma*: (1) *akasha* or space, which was “the unlimited and unchanging;” (2) *pratisamkhyanirodha* or cessation (*nirodha*) of the passions (*klesha*) by the power of perfect discrimination; (3) *apratisamkhyanirodha* or cessation of the passions or *kleshas* without the intervention of perfect discrimination; (4) *achala* or disinterest concerning power and pleasure; (5) *samjñavedananirodha*, which is a state wherein *samjña* or recognition in terms of concepts and *vedana* or mental sensation are inactive; and (6) *tathata* or thatness, which was the true absolute-*qua*-Base of the *Yogacharas*: the basic constituent, nature or condition of all phenomena, which unveils in *nirvana* and is veiled in *samsara*. (Actually, according to the *Mahayana* in general, *tathata* first unveils in the first of the four stages of the path of preparation or path of application [Skt., *prayoga-marga*], which is the stage called “heat” [Skt., *ushmagata*; Tib., *drö* {*drod*}].)

In the Rangtongpa sub-schools (*Swatantrika* and *Prasangika*) of *Madhyamaka*, dualistic appearances, which we wrongly perceive as being self-existent (*swabhava*), are deemed to be conditioned; **in turn, the unconditioned is the voidness or emptiness (*swabhava shunyata*) of those appearances, which corresponds to the fact that they lack inherent existence, and that nothing that can be asserted in their regard can either correspond exactly to them or exhaust them. (???????????)**

The view expressed in the regular text of this book, according to which conditioned phenomena are in truth unconditioned, is best explained in terms of the philosophy of the *Mahamadhyamaka* sub-school of the *Madhyamaka* School, which correctly asserts that conditioned phenomena are in truth unconditioned to the extent that absolute truth, corresponding to the Buddha-nature and explained as the inseparability of appearances and emptiness, is free of the four characteristics of all that is conditioned or made (Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, pp. 196-8, 206-7). If the *rupakaya* were something that arises as a product of the accumulation of merits, then it would be compounded and conditioned; however, since the *rupakaya* is inherent in the Buddha-nature qua Base, which is the indivisibility of appearances and emptiness, so that it never arises or ceases, and is not affected or modified by conditions, it is unconditioned and uncompounded. Dudjom Rinpoche's statements in this regard are quoted and discussed in the section on *Mahamadhyamaka* of Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

¹⁶³ As stated in a previous note, the word “phenomenon” is derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, meaning, “that which appears.” Strictly speaking, “that which appears” is the deceptive appearances that characterize *samsara* and that veil the true condition of reality. Contrariwise, *nirvana*, even though it comprises the sense data that are the basis of appearances, insofar as it involves the transcendence of all false appearances and the perfect realization of the true condition of reality, in a special sense may be regarded as being beyond “that which appears.” In order to allow this interpretation, I preferred not to speak of the phenomena of *nirvana*, but of the metaphenomenon or the series of metaphenomena of *nirvana* (it would be more precise to speak of the metaphenomenon of *nirvana* than to speak of the series of metaphenomena of *nirvana*, but the latter is also permissible if we are to refer to *nirvana* in reference to our characteristically samsaric way of experience).

¹⁶⁴ This does not mean that it is permanent. If the nature that manifests in *nirvana* is the single nature of all entities, then it does not have either *genus proximum* or *differentiam specificam*, and hence it cannot be said to be either nonimpermanent or not-nonimpermanent.

¹⁶⁵ It is said that the failure to realize the voidness of those phenomena that are not persons is an impediment to omniscience—which can be realized solely through the practice of the *Mahayana* and higher vehicles, and which is a necessary condition for effectively helping others. This will be discussed in the chapter dealing with the Path of renunciation, sections on the *Pratyekabuddhayana* and the *Bodhisattvayana*.

¹⁶⁶ See the explanation of the etymology of the term Dzogchen (*rdzogs-chen*) in a previous note, and in particular the explanation of the reasons why the translation of dzogpa (*rdzogs-pa*) as “completeness / plenitude” emphasizes the *katak* (*ka-dag*) aspect of Dzogchen, and the translation of the term as “perfection” emphasizes the *lhundrub* (*lhun-grub*) aspect of Dzogchen.

¹⁶⁷ In Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 768, we are told that at the time when the Nepalese Bharo Tsukdzin was to leave Tibet, he offered his teacher Guru Chöki Wangchuk sixty *zho* (weight measure corresponding to one-tenth of the Tibetan ounce or *srang*) of the gold he had gathered as a gold digger in the country. The Master asked Bharo to mix the gold with barley flour and perform a burnt offering, and then asked him to throw the remains into a nearby rushing stream. According to a different account, as Bharo did so, Guru Chöwang declared “what should I want gold for, when the whole world is gold for me?” (According to Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 768, the Master said the dakinis would rejoice in this throwing the gold away.)

(The name Bharo [Newar, *bade*] refers to the Buddhist priestly caste among the Newars, which in later times had exclusive rights to gold- and silver-work. Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. II, p. 72, note 1010 by the translators.)

¹⁶⁸ We learn different sets of values in different social contexts or groups, and among the sets of values we learn, a worldly one posits acting in self-interest as the highest value, whereas some religious and ethical ones posit the sacrifice of self-interest for the sake of others as the highest value. However, this is not the place to consider this in detail, and so for the sake of simplicity I decided to pit acting on the basis of self-interest against acting on the basis of learned values.

¹⁶⁹ See the preceding note.

¹⁷⁰ The self-interference of artists will be greater when they are deemed responsible for their work, and are valued according to the degree of excellence their work attains: fear of blundering—or, in the terminology of Sartre, anguish—will instill doubt into the artist, which will make him or her more prone to self-interference. This doubt can be magnified by the exposure to the objectifying, judging gaze of others, which induces the artist to *become* what those others see as him or her, and, by becoming an object, interfere with his or her subjectivity in the sense of “capacity to freely and uninhibitedly act as a subject.”

The power of a critical gaze may be so great that even *Zen* Masters with a relatively high degree of spiritual realization have been incapable of freeing themselves from the interference that it induces. Consider the following anecdote told in a book on *Zen* Buddhism by an anonymous compiler (1959, pp. 13-4.):

“Master Kosen drew (in Chinese characters) the words ‘The First Principle’ which are carved over the door of Oaku Temple in Kyoto. He drew them with his brush on a sheet of paper and then they were carved in wood.

“A student of the Master had mixed the ink for him and had remained standing near him, watching the Master’s calligraphy. This student said, “Not so good!” Kosen tried again. The student said, “This is worse than the last one!” and Kosen tried again.

“After attempt number sixty four, the ink was gone and the student went out to mix some more. Having been left alone, without being distracted by any critical eye that might observe him, Kosen made another rapid drawing with what was left of the ink. When the student returned, he took a good look at this latest effort.

“‘A masterpiece!’ he said.”

Arts can be undertaken as “Paths” (Chinese: *tao*; Japanese: *do*) of spiritual realization: as disciplines of action directed toward the achievement of nonaction (*wu-wei*) or “action that emerges through the spontaneity of the Tao, without the interference inherent in the intentionality of an apparently separate subject” (*wei-wu-wei*). Those who have established themselves firmly in the Awake state, so that the Tao may flow uninterruptedly through them, will not be affected by the gaze of others and will be able to accomplish masterpieces under the watchful eye of the most critical and fearsome of observers.

¹⁷¹ The teachings note that the visual is most primary, and that sight is the most determining of senses (even though, according to Dzogchen, manifestation begins with sound rather than light and color). Recently, neurophysiological experiments determined that memory depends on the encephalic zone that processes spatiality (which is associated with the sense of sight more than with any of the other four senses acknowledged by Western psychology); this would show that we organize sensory data, perceive them and remember them in terms of the spatio-temporal metaphors of the *tsel* (*rtsal*) mode of manifestation of energy that will be explained in detail in Part Two of this book.

¹⁷² Coarse thoughts correspond to what Hume called “ideas” (a concept he took from Locke and Berkeley, but which he modified in order to make it suit his own worldview), which are mental phenomena of *dang* (*gdangs*) energy that reproduce “material” phenomena of *tsel* (*rtsal*) energy, and therefore are particular rather than universal (Hume’s nominalism having to do with the fact that this is the only kind of ideas or thoughts he admitted); these include both those that Descartes called “discursive thoughts,” which are copies of impressions of hearing and which, insofar as they are sequentially articulated by “mentally pronouncing” chains of words in our minds, are temporal, and the patterns or configurations of sight (in combination or not with the other senses), which are copies of the impressions received through the senses involved and which are spatial.

The ones called “subtle thoughts” are those that Descartes called “intuitive concepts,” which rather than being sequentially pronounced by our imagination, are *instantaneous, mute comprehensions of essence* that, in the *recognition* (in the sense in which authors such as H. H. Price (1975) use the term) of sensory collections of characteristics (Skt. *lakshana*; Tib. *tsempai* [*mtshan dpe*])—regardless of whether the latter are what Hume called impressions or what he called ideas—interpret and experience them in terms of universals (which, however, are neither absolute truths nor sources of truth; on the contrary, when we take them for the absolute truth of essents, delusion ensues; furthermore, just like what Hume called impressions and what he termed ideas, they are phenomena that exist only insofar as they appear in the human mind, and that even while they appear are empty of self-existence or substance). In the *recognition* of data of *all* senses, including that of hearing, the first type of concepts to intervene are always the subtle and intuitive ones).

Lastly, there are thoughts that the inner Tantric teachings designate as “super-subtle:” the basic structure known as the “threefold directional thought-structure,” which upon being delusorily valued gives rise to the illusion that there is (1) an experience, (2) something experienced and (3) someone who experiences, and therefore produces the illusory subject-object duality that marks all of *samsaric* experience.

Since *definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*, all the contents of thoughts are relative: they are defined by inclusion in a wider genus that contains them (*genus proximum*) and by contrast with those within the same genus that are their opposites, or which are stark different from them (*differentiam specificam*). What *Mahayana* Buddhism designates as absolute truth (in this case, in the sense the

Dzogchen teachings give the term Base) cannot correspond to the content of any thought, since it does not have either proximate genus or specific difference, for it is the common essence or nature of all entities and of all thoughts. In turn, basic delusion consists in taking the relative—which, as just noted, comprises the contents of *all* thoughts—as absolute, the dependent as independent, the insubstantial as substantial, the posited as inherent or given, etc.

¹⁷³ Patency *n* (1656): The quality or state of being patent (Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 1983 ed.). The term “roaring patency” indicates that in total silence this patency may be accompanied by a roaring nyam (*nyams*) or illusory experience, and that all discursive thoughts, which reproduce the sound of words, liberate themselves spontaneously in this roar, which is beyond the subject-object duality.

¹⁷⁴ As shown elsewhere in this book, the three aspects of the Base are: ngowo (*ngo-bo*) or essence, which is voidness; rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) or nature, which is reflectiveness; and thukje (*thugs-rje*) or energy, consisting in the disposition to manifest phenomena and the uninterrupted flow of phenomena. In a subsequent section they will be discussed in further detail.

¹⁷⁵ Delusion causes us to attribute an enormous value and an enormous importance to some phenomena, a medium degree of value and importance to others, a very low one to still others, and no value or importance at all to yet others. Although nonpractitioners may think the last possibility is identical to the absence of delusory valuation-absolutization, this is incorrect, for it is an effect of delusory valuation-absolutization, relative to the different degrees of value and importance that we attribute to different phenomena, and therefore it is an instance of delusion.

¹⁷⁶ In many instances of the base-of-all or kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) the continua of sensation of all sensory fields are manifest, though there is no *dualistic consciousness of them*. However, as noted in the *rDzogs pa chen po kun-tu-bzang-po ye-shes klong-gi rgyud*, a Dzogchen Tantra revealed by Jigme Lingpa, the potentiality of kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) to produce *samsara* and *nirvana* is present even in the five unconscious states—which are the absence of all thoughts, the two kinds of cessation of all mental activity (*pratisamkhyanirodha* and *apratisamkhyanirodha*), swoon and deep sleep. See Guenther, Herbert, 1977, pp. 116-117 and note 11, p. 117.

¹⁷⁷ Transpersonal psychology has given consistent continuity to the overestimation of indeterminate “peak experiences” fostered by Abraham Maslow (who, however, had the wisdom of warning that for such experiences to be truly valuable they would have to arise in the context of a self-consistent method); consequently, the theses and proposals of this brand of psychology might as well lead people to pursue conditioned states located near the summit—or at the very summit—of *samsara*, or to establish themselves in a neutral state such as the absorption of the base-of-all wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active (which may be compared to a night in which [in terms of a phrase that Hegel applied to the wrong object] “all cats are grey”—or, in German, “all cows are black”). (My translator warned me that in English the “cat” sentence is used in the context of erotic relations in a “sexist, women-denigrating sense;” however, this is no reason for sacrificing the allusion to Hegel’s statement, which to my knowledge has nothing to do with that context or with that attitude.)

Originally Ken Wilber posited three levels of human experience, and with the passing of time the number of such levels increased progressively—so that, by 1996 (cf., e.g., Wilber, K. 1996, Spanish 1996), the original threefold classification had been replaced by a complex map of combined “holoarchies.” However, the basic inaccuracy in Wilber’s conception kept being the same as in 1977, and consisted in presenting Awakening or Enlightenment as though it lay in establishing oneself on a level characterized by the experience of cosmic unity that would be above all other levels (and which thus would be *relative* to the other ones). In Wilber, K. (1977; Spanish translation, 1990: quotation retranslated into English from the Spanish version), this level is defined in the following words:

“The...basic level that here we call mental, is the one commonly known as mystical consciousness, and it comprises the sensation of being fundamentally one with the universe. Just as the ego level includes the mind, and the existential level includes the mind and the body, the mental level includes the mind, the body and the rest of the universe.”

Thus we can see that for Wilber liberation consists in the *comprehension* (a word that, incidentally, refers to the understanding in terms of thoughts) of the plane in which one has the *feeling of being fundamentally one with the universe*. We no longer identify solely with the mind, or even with the mind plus the body: now we *identify with the whole universe*. However, so long as we continue to *identify* with something, we continue to be under delusion—and since now this identification is so pleasurable, we won’t be willing to

let go of it, and so we will continue to experience in terms of delusorily valued and absolutized thoughts, rather than creating the conditions that may allow such thoughts to liberate themselves spontaneously. (I am using the term “[to] *identify with* [this or that]” insofar as it is easier for readers to understand than the more precise concept of “[to] *make oneself* [this or that],” as defined in Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980. Briefly, the point is that identification is a less immediate and more intellectual process than the one described by Sartre. However, both are based on the delusory valuation-absolutization of thoughts.)

My objection to the characterization of the process of Awakening as a progressive climbing through levels in a hierarchy or holoarchy is due to the fact that in general climbing is a movement away from authenticity like the one explained by Ronald D. Laing in terms of a “spiral of pretences” (reproduced in a subsequent note), a clear example of which is the ascension through the various realms of *samsara* toward the “peak of experience” consisting in the highest of the four formless realms (*arupa loka*) belonging to the formless sphere (*arupya-dhatu*)—and possibly beyond, into the meditative absorption of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active. And, in fact, a hermeneutical reading of Wilber, K., 1996 will show that the holoarchy that this author identifies with the stages of the Path does not at all respond to the latter, at least as understood in Dzogchen and other higher Buddhist systems, but on the contrary may seem to reflect the ascent toward the peak of existence.* At any rate, Awakening does not consist in dwelling in any of the levels posited by Wilber, but in going beyond the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought that gives rise to *all* levels, and remaining in the condition of absolute equality wherein there can be no hierarchy or holoarchy whatsoever.

Stanislav Grof divides human experience into four realms, the “highest” of which is the one he calls “transpersonal,” which according to his definition comprises all possible types of experience of union with the universe, of divine archetypes, of “previous reincarnations” and so on, no matter how delusory such experiences may be. Furthermore, Grof has stated that psychotherapy has its optimum result when it culminates in experiences of the thus defined transpersonal realm. Therefore he incurs in the indeterminateness that characterizes most thinkers in the field of transpersonal psychology, and, moreover, falls within the bounds of the shamanic as defined in Harner, Michael J., Spanish 1973, insofar as he takes the experiences of altered states of consciousness that he classifies under the label “transpersonal” as constituting sanity, and views the states of non-transpersonal, ordinary, everyday experience as belonging to a realm that somehow psychotherapy must help the individual transcend. (According to Harner, South American shamans, and in general shamans throughout the world, take for the *true reality* the one they gain access to through shamanic means—which is different from ordinary, everyday reality and which most people would characterize as “supernatural,” but which, in terms of the Dzogchen teachings, is as delusive as ordinary, everyday reality insofar as it is also produced by the delusory valuation and absolutization of thought—and think ordinary, everyday experience is false or illusory with regard to it.)

Furthermore, what Grof called Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPMs) are stages, not only of the process of birth, but principally of a far more encompassing constant that manifests in the different instances of the bardo between death and rebirth, among which the following are worth mentioning: the stage between the ordinary death and rebirth of human beings; the stage between psychological death and rebirth into a more balanced ego (discussed in Bateson, Ed. and Int., 1961; Laing, 1967; and Bateson, 1972, among other texts, and probably corresponding to the shamanic journey undertaken in paleo-Siberian shamanism that is expressed in a symbolism analogous to that of the *Divine Comedy* and that was described in Eliade, Mircea, 1964); and the unfolding of practices such as those of *thod-rgal* and the *yang-thig* of the Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen teachings, which result in ontological death and an ensuing uninterrupted condition of total plenitude and perfection (*rDzogs-chen*). Confinement within any BPM is pathological or, at least, not truly liberating; going through the whole process involving the series of BPMs while the body is clinically alive (as discussed in Bateson, Ed. and Int., 1961; Laing, 1967 and Bateson, 1972, among other texts) may result in a more balanced ego; however, it is going through the process in the framework of a traditional wisdom tradition (for example, in the practices of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] and the Yangthik [*yang-thig*]) that may burn out the seeds of *samsara*, so that the individual may become established in inherently all-liberating *nirvana*.

In short, it is clear that Wilber, Grof and the majority of transpersonal psychologists fail to distinguish between neutral (*lungmaten* [*lung-ma-bstan*]) and delusory “peak experiences,” on the one hand, and Awakening *qua* total transcendence of both peaks and depressions, on the other. For greater details, cf. Capriles, Elías, 2000c (previous version in Spanish: Capriles, Elías, 1999b) and Capriles, Elías, electronic

publication 2007, 3 vols. (which contains the most thorough discussion of this matter I have undertaken so far).

Concerning the current debate featuring Washburn and Grof, on the one side, and Wilber, on the other, and which Wilber has characterized in terms of what he called the “pre/trans fallacy” (1993) and the “ascender/descender debate” (1995), both sides seem to be equally off the mark. Grof (1985, 2000) and Washburn (1995) assert early, *prenatal* life experiences to be legitimate sources of transpersonal experience corresponding to *deeper* consciousness, while Wilber objects that Grof and Washburn are confusing early, prepersonal life experiences with the transpersonal experiences that in his (wrong) view correspond to spiritual realization. I have already objected to the characterization of the process of Awakening as a progressive climbing through levels in a hierarchy or holoarchy, for such climbing would be a movement away from authenticity like the one Laing represented in terms of a “spiral of pretences” (as exemplified by the ascent through the various realms of *samsara* toward the “peak of experience,” and possibly beyond, into the meditative absorption of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active). Insofar as I have characterized the Path as an *undoing* of the pretences of Laing’s spiral to be achieved by *seeing* through the illusory divisions established in the process of socialization and through all that is conditioned, I could be seen as siding with Washburn and Grof and asserting that the true Path is a descending one, which consists in the uncovering of the Base. However, just as the true Path cannot be explained as a process of ascent, it cannot be explained as a process of descent and reduced to the undoing of the illusory divisions and wayward habits resulting from the process of socialization: in the best of cases, this undoing would allow us to revive the more wholesome states we experienced as children before these illusory divisions and wayward habits were established, or to revive intrauterine states, or the states that manifested in the bardo between death and rebirth (or perhaps even states experienced in “previous lives”), but by no means could it lead to the manifestation of rigpa *qua* Path and/or rigpa *qua* Fruit, for in ordinary, unenlightened individuals these do not manifest during infancy, nor in intrauterine life, nor in the bardo, nor in “previous lives.”

In fact, if rigpa is not reGnized upon the shining forth of the clear light in the chikkhai bardo (*’chi-ka’i bar-do*) or bardo of the moment of death, the experience of the clear light will correspond to the condition of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, which some Dzogchen texts call rigpa *qua* Base, and which involves basic unawareness (*avidya* or marigpa in the first of the senses established by the threefold classification adopted here: the obscuration, by a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction, of the nondual Awake self-awareness that the teachings of Dzogchen *Ati* call rigpa, so that the latter cannot make patent its own face in the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path or rigpa-*qua*-Fruit); therefore, only if rigpa had been reGnized when the clear light shone forth at the moment of death, or in subsequent stages of the bardo (or in “previous lives,” for that matter), could rigpa *qua* Path *theoretically* be found by *retroceding* and *undoing* (however, even in such a case the reGnition of rigpa would be a wholly new event requiring the application of specific instruction in the present). Therefore, by these means one cannot achieve *nirvana*; at best one could experience the neutral condition of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active (which in the experiences that Grof referred to as BPM 1 often alternates with the grasping at the base-of-all that gives rise to formless samsaric experiences): this way one does not obtain the Fruit of Awakening. Therefore, if the Path may be described as a process of undoing and descending, this is so only in part, for it must be clear that the Fruit does not lie in recovering the greater wholeness characteristic of early infancy, of some intrauterine experience, or of some bardo experience, but in the reGnition (of) rigpa, which is a wholly new occurrence. Therefore, strictly speaking the true Path cannot be properly understood either in terms of the interpretation developed by Wilber, or in terms of those developed by Grof and Washburn.

To conclude, it must be noted that among transpersonal psychologists who have taken LSD and similar substances, many have taken for the initial manifestation of Awakening or *nirvana* what in fact is the neutral state of the “base-of-all carrying propensities” (in which, as we have seen, neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active), or delusive, samsaric states such as the formless absorptions which result from the subsequent grasping at the base-of-all and which are the higher regions of *samsara*. This seems to have happened to Alan Watts as well, for in the nineteen sixties (Watts, Alan W., 1962) he wrote that the ingestion of LSD could allow people to experience Awakening—and, furthermore, rather than describing Awakening, he reported a series of experiences that seemed to include the base-of-all carrying propensities, the subsequent grasping at the base-of-all, and the ensuing samsaric formless realms.

*As noted above, with time Wilber's levels multiplied; however, for a long time he did not discriminate among different types of hierarchy. By 1982 (Wilber, K., 1982), the levels were: (1) the physical; (2) the biological; (3) the mental (no longer intended to correspond to Awakening or Enlightenment, for at this stage the term indicated the "level of ego, logic and thought"); (4) the subtle (of archetypes, transindividual, intuitive); (5) the causal (formless brilliancy or luminosity, perfect transcendence), and (6) the absolute (consciousness as such, which would be the source of all other levels). Note that the explanation of the "causal level" Wilber offers us in this book correctly describes the neutral state known as base-of-all or *kunzhi* (*kun-gzhi*), wherein neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active—and in particular the manifestation of this state in the *bardo*, when the "clear light of the void" shines forth (as different from the *dharmakaya*, which consists in the reGnition [of] *rigpa* upon the shining forth of the clear light or in other experiences of the *dang* [*gdangs*] form of manifestation of energy). In turn, the sixth and last is, more than a level, the true condition of all levels, and as such it seems to correspond to the Base, which itself is not *nirvana* (either *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit) but *that which must unveil* for *nirvana* to obtain, and which somehow Wilber turned into the summit of a hierarchical classification of experience (note that the term Base tends to evoke the bottom rather than the top of a pyramid).

As late as 1996, Wilber (Wilber, K. 1996, Spanish 1996) was offering his readers hierarchical schemas (which lately he has preferred to call "holoarchival"). However, by then the levels were organized in different systems: one involving three groups of levels described by Ervin Laszlo (Laszlo, 1987, p. 55); two involving five levels each; another one involving nine "basic structures of consciousness;" a double one involving twelve levels ("the great holoarchy in Plotinus and Aurobindo"); and the one involving four series of thirteen levels each that Wilber calls "the four quadrants."

Among the above systems, here we are concerned mainly with the first one, involving three groups of levels, and with the one establishing nine "basic structures of consciousness:" while the first group responds to the perfectly valid need to distinguish degrees of complexity in reality (which since the early nineteen nineties I have avowed in various works: in Capriles, 1994, to this end I quoted Laszlo, 1974, pp. 29-31), the last group is yet another hierarchical ("holoarchival") division of states of consciousness of the type criticized above (as well as in Capriles 1999a, 2000a, and 2000c). In this case, the hierarchy comprises nine "fulcra," plus a tenth category that, according to Wilber, "is not so much a fulcrum or separate level, but is rather the very Essence of all levels, of all states, of all conditions"—a definition that, once more, clearly refers to what the teachings of Dzogchen *Ati* call the Base, but which Wilber has turned into a Self *qua* Summit.

Among these "fulcra", the sixth (the centaur or existential level) is defined as involving (a) the integration of mind and body and (b) the authenticity of not eluding basic anguish (i.e., not eluding that which, according to Heidegger, is inherent in being-for-death, and which, according to Sartre, is inherent to being-for-Self). Though it is correct to note that the first level of genuine realization is often *preceded* by the authenticity of not eluding basic anguish (which, according to Wilber, takes place in the sixth fulcrum), the full experience of the being of the human individual that basic anguish is, does *not* in any sense involve the integration of mind and body that, according to Wilber, is inherent to the sixth fulcrum.

It is in the following fulcra that the transpersonal levels begin. In the seventh fulcrum—the "psychic level"—the sensation of a separate identity dissolves momentarily. To illustrate this, Wilber writes [p. 271 of the Spanish version]: "...a person can provisionally dissolve the sensation of separate identity (the ego or the centaur) and then experience what I call natural mysticism, the *identification* with the ordinary or sensory-motor world. Perhaps you yourself have experienced this sensation in some occasion when, taking a walk through nature, relaxed and open, you have suddenly realized that the observer had disappeared and there was only mountain, *you had become* the mountain [*italics my own*]." If in the contemplation of nature the mental subject actually disappeared in a spontaneous manner, the ensuing condition would be an absorption of the base-of-all rather than the *dharmakaya*, for the latter can manifest only upon the application of specific instructions transmitted by genuine wisdom traditions such as *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* and so forth; however, in the immediately following moment a dualistic consciousness of this condition is likely to dawn, and if this consciousness is established for a longer lapse there manifests an experience of the formless realms in which the subject-object duality is still operative, but is obliterated by the fact that the spurious mental subject *becomes* (in the sense Sartre gave the term in *Being and Nothingness*) what is appearing as object—whether it is a mountain, as in Wilber's description, or a seeming "infinite," etc.

In the eighth—the "subtle level"—the individual contacts non-ordinary strata of perception and subtle non-Jungian archetypes. With regard to this fulcrum it must be remarked that *per se* the manifestation of non-ordinary strata of perception and subtle non-Jungian archetypes does not correspond to any level of

realization: such things may happen in psychosis or upon the ingestion of a psychedelic drug. The point is that realization does not depend on *what is it* that manifests, but on *how* does it manifest: for a condition to be a genuine realization it must be nondual, and yet this nonduality must not be a neutral condition in which there is not an absolute freedom of awareness, for otherwise we would be referring to the neutral condition of the base-of-all.

Finally, Wilber characterizes the ninth fulcrum, which paradoxically he calls *causal*, as nondual—which necessarily implies that it is beyond dualities such as the cause-effect relation, the subject-object structure of knowledge and action, etc., and therefore it should not be called *causal*. According to Wilber, this last, nondual level corresponds to what *Mahayana* Buddhism calls voidness or emptiness (Skt., *shunyata*; Tib., *tongpanyi* [*stong-pa-nyid*]; Chinese, *wu*; Japanese, *mu*); therefore, if Wilber's words are taken at face value, the highest Madhyamaka subschools of *Mahayana* philosophy and the higher vehicles will agree that this level is not the absolute truth of the *Mahayana*, which is not mere voidness (and, in fact, Wilber's description of this level seem to be referring to the experience of the *dharmadhatu* in the condition of the base-of-all, or to another of the non-nirvanic experiences of voidness that may manifest on the Path).

More problematic is the fact that Wilber also makes the above level correspond to that which different Vedic traditions have called “the disinterested witness:” a Hindu concept positing a “subject” that is characterized as “absolute” but which, nonetheless, is separate and different from its object (cf., e.g., Gupta, Bina, 1947, 2^a Ed. 1998)—ignoring the fact that a subject different and separate from its objects *necessarily* must be *relative* to them (and thus could not be regarded as being absolute, which by definition is that which is not relative to anything). Moreover, Wilber makes this level correspond to that which different Indian spiritual traditions call *nirodha* or “cessation” (Wilber, K. 1996, Spanish 1996, p. 293 of the Spanish edition)—which implies that it cannot be equated to the realization of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*, which is the state of rigpa that does not involve cessation in any sense (had Wilber not made it crystal clear that this level involves *cessation*, we could still wishfully think that by “voidness” he might be referring imprecisely to the integration of the experience of the *dharmadhatu* in rigpa, which is comparable to the manner in which a reflection manifests in a mirror, and hence to the first level of realization on the Dzogchen Path; however, his use of the term *nirodha* definitively dispels any doubts in this regard [for a review of the reasons for this, cf. Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, as well as Part Two of this book]).

In *none* of the genuine paths I am familiar with, does the practitioner have to go through *all* the fulcra posited by Wilber, and to do so *precisely in the order he establishes*. Though Wilber intended his seventh, eighth and ninth fulcra to be a progression of levels of realization beginning with the *nirmanakaya*, continuing with the *sambhogakaya*, and concluding with the *dharmakaya*, which is how the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation present the successive realization of the kayas, as shown above his fulcra cannot correspond to what these Tantras refer to by these names, for: (1) his wording suggests the seventh fulcrum consists in the neutral condition of the base-of-all and/or the formless realms located at the top of *samsara*; (2) he never stated that in his eighth fulcrum the non-ordinary strata of perception and subtle non-Jungian archetypes must manifest in the nondual manner characteristic of the rölpa [*rol-pa*] form of manifestation of energy, as is the case with the *sambhogakaya*; and (3) his ninth fulcrum seems to consist in the experience of the *dharmadhatu* in the condition of the base-of-all, or in another of the non-nirvanic experiences of voidness that manifest on the Path. Furthermore, in the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo* the three kayas are realized in a sequence that is contrary to the one that characterizes the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation and do not correspond to what these Tantras call by the same names. The point is that according to the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* series of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*—which Wilber has studied with at least one of the most important Masters of our time—the levels that, according to the Tantras of the Path of transformation, are the *nirmanakaya*, the *sambhogakaya* and the *dharmakaya*, and which according to these Tantras are realized precisely in this order, are not the three kayas of Buddhahood: in the *Atiyana* the first *kaya* to be realized is the *dharmakaya*, which is far beyond the *nirmanakaya*, the *sambhogakaya* and the *dharmakaya* as understood in the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation, and corresponds to what these Tantras call the *swabhavikaya*, which in their system is the fourth and final level of realization. In their turn, the subsequent levels of realization of Dzogchen *Ati*, which these teachings call *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*, by no means can be reached through the methods of the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation, for they go far beyond the final level of realization of these systems.

¹⁷⁸ The individuals who, instead of integrating into the nondual gnosis of primordial awareness the states produced by means of the Tantric visualization practices that are applied in the generation stage (Skt.,

utpattikrama; Tib., kyerim [*bskyed-rim*]) or similar practices, cling to those states, thereby may take birth in the heavens of the sphere of form. Likewise, those who, incapable of integrating into the nondual gnosis of primordial awareness the experiences of pleasure that are obtained by means of the practices of the completion or perfection stage (Skt., *sampannakrama*; Tib., dzogrim [*rdzogs-rim*]) of the inner Tantras or similar practices, cling to these states, may enter the heavens of the sphere of sensuality. (The two mentioned stages of Tantric practice are explained in the chapter on the Path of transformation of the *Vajrayana*.)

- ¹⁷⁹ *Samsara* manifests out of the absorptions of the base-of-all (Skt., *alaya*; Tib., kunzhi [*kun-gzhi*]) under the impulse of what is known as self-preoccupation (Skt., *ahamkara*; Tib., ngadzin [*nga-'dzin*]), at one of three different stages in the arising of the consciousnesses posited by the Dzogchen teachings: (1) we may be led to grasp at the condition of the base-of-all, and thereby enter the formless absorptions of the top of *samsara*; (2) if we are not so led, still we may get stuck in the subsequent, incipient drive to grasp at forms that the Dzogchen teachings call consciousness of the base-of-all (kunzhi namshe [*kun-gzhi rnam-shes*] or kunzhi nampar shepa [*kun-gzhi rnam-par shes-pa*]), and thereby enter the absorptions of the realm of form; (3) if we are not caught in either of the two previous samsaric realms, after the manifestation of the incipient drive to grasp at forms that the Dzogchen teachings call consciousness of the base-of-all, we will begin to single out within the as yet undivided totality of sense data, one after the other, a series of collections of characteristics (Skt., *lakshana*; Tib., tsenpe [*mtshan-dpe*]), and will establish ourselves as apparently substantial and continuous subjects by reacting to those collections of characteristics in ways that assert and confirm ourselves as separate selves—thereby entering the realm of sensuality (*kamadhatu* or *kama loka*).

All of this will be considered in further detail in a subsequent note; for a more detailed explanation, see Part Two of this book and Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

- ¹⁸⁰ As briefly indicated in a previous note, the common teachings of the *Sutrayana* place formless absorptions and the corresponding samsaric sphere (the *arupa loka* or *arupadhatu*) at the top of the hierarchy of psychological states; they place absorptions with form and the corresponding samsaric sphere (the *rupa loka* or *rupadhatu*) in the middle range; and place the absorptions of sensuality and the corresponding sphere (the *kama loka* or *kamadhatu*) lowest. As may be appreciated in the symbolism of the Vajracharya's hat, the inner Tantric teachings of the *Vajrayana* invert this hierarchy, placing the sphere of sensuality at the top, the sphere of form in the middle, and the formless sphere at the bottom: the brim represents the *arupa loka*, the crown represents the *rupa loka*, and the feather—which rises above the crown as an adornment—represents the *kama loka*, the manifestations of which are an adornment for the realized Tantrika. For some reflections in this regard, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

- ¹⁸¹ In Buddhism, there has been much discussion as to whether or not in the *arupa loka* there is a genuine and thorough surpassing of the figure/ground distinction. For example, the Mahasanghikas asserted that *arupa* comprised *rupa* or figure in a subtle sense. In his turn, this writer has claimed that the formless is established in contrast to what has form and is recognized in terms of delusorily valued concepts as the “general form of the formless” by contrast with the “general form of what has form.”

In Tarthang Tulku, 1977a, the limited expansion of space-time-knowledge in more spacious samsaric spheres is contrasted to the condition of Total Space-Time-Awareness proper to Awakening. The four absorptions of the *arupa loka* or *arupadhatu* are instances of such limited expansion, which contrasts with the narrower perception of figure as singled out from ground; however, in both cases there is *recognition*, which always consists in the understanding of a *lakshana* or collection of characteristics in terms of a delusorily valued concept—independently of whether the *lakshana* is a singled out figure that as such stands against a background, or whether it is the above mentioned “general form of the formless.”

In turn, the state of Total Space-Time-Awareness is the very transcendence of recognition in terms of delusorily valued concepts, and insofar as it does not involve either the recognition of the “general form of the formless” or the recognition of singled-out forms, it cannot be said either to involve form or not to involve form.

- ¹⁸² In Sartrean terminology, the perceiver establishes a *link of being* with the pseudo-totality that is perceived as object. I did not express this in these terms insofar as readers who are not familiar with Sartre's philosophy would fail to understand the expression “link of being” without an exhaustive explanation. Therefore, I chose to say “identification,” even though this term does not convey so precisely what I am

referring to. (For an explanation of the concept of establishing a *link of being* with an object, see Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980.)

¹⁸³ See the preceding note.

¹⁸⁴ Both thoughts and the space between thoughts are manifestations of the ngowo (*ngo-bo*) or “essence” aspect of the Base, which is voidness. When thoughts or other manifestations of the dang [*gdangs*] mode of manifestation of energy are reGnized, so that the ngowo aspect of the Base is apprehended correctly rather than delusorily, this is the reGnition (of) the *dharmakaya*. For a more extensive and in-depth explanation of this see Part Two of this book.

¹⁸⁵ Other examples would be “all is the undivided energy-field,” “all is the Buddha nature,” “all is the One Mind,” “all is God,” etc., etc.

This delusion does not take place exclusively in traditional meditation. In the early seventies, I met an American hippy in the Greek island of Mikonos. One afternoon he told me he was on LSD: seeming quite marveled, he constantly repeated, “All is one,” “all is one.” This seems to be a clear example of how an individual may identify with a series of coarse thoughts of the discursive kind that he uses to interpret a condition of larger-than-usual space-time-knowledge.

As suggested in a previous note, sharp increases of the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thig-le*), such as those that take place as a result of the ingestion of LSD and similar substances, may give access to rigpa-*qua*-Base or, which is the same, the primordial, deep base-of-all (*ye-don kun-gzhi*), which according to the Dzogchen teachings is the source of all appearances of *samsara* and *nirvana*, and which has always been flowing with a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction (*mongcha* [*rmongs-chal*]) that obscures its inherent nondual self-awareness, preventing it from making patent rigpa's own face in the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path and rigpa-*qua*-Fruit. At this point, this obscuring element is what is called gyu dagnyi chikpai marigpa (*rgyu bdag-nyid gcig-pa'i ma-rig-pa*).

The above condition, in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are manifest, often has been taken for the manifestation of rigpa *qua* Path or rigpa *qua* Fruit. This happens immediately after the manifestation of the second type of *avidya* or marigpa in the threefold classification adopted here, called automatically arising illusion or lhenchig kyepai marigpa (*lhan-cig skyes-pa'i ma-rig-pa*), which gives rise to the subject-object duality and hence causes us to attempt to take the condition of the base-of-all or rigpa *qua* Base as object—and so what manifests is no longer the base-of-all, but the experience of the formless realms that results from grasping at the base-of-all—. If the subsequent arising of the third type of *avidya* or marigpa, which is the one called imagining delusion (*kun-brtags ma-rig-pa*), does not result in the singling out of manifold entities in the continuum appearing as object, and the yogi manages to make the grasping at the continuum in question stable over a long period (which is *impossible* in the case of individuals under the effect of LSD and similar substances), he or she may take birth in the *arupya-dhatu* or formless realm that is the summit of *samsara* and stay in this realm for periods that subjectively may be experienced as aeons.

When in the nineteen sixties Alan Watts (Watts, Alan W., 1962) wrote that the ingestion of LSD could allow people to “experience” Awakening, he was confusing his own LSD-induced experience of the “base-of-all carrying propensities” and probably the subsequent experience of a formless realm, with the *dharmakaya qua* initial manifestation of Awakening or *nirvana*. The point is that, as noted above, when the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness increases sharply, the base-of-all carrying propensities may manifest spontaneously with the arising of nonconceptual experiences of pure sensation, without there being the need to apply any *dharma* method whatsoever to this end. However, the manifestation of rigpa-*qua*-Path that takes place upon the reGnition of the *dharmakaya* that makes patent rigpa's own face and is free from the basic obscuration inherent in the “base-of-all carrying propensities” cannot occur in the same manner and by the same means. This is one of the reasons why, as stated in the regular text to which the call for this note was affixed, Jigme Lingpa predicted that in our time many yogis would commit the terrible mistake of taking for the *dharmakaya* the condition of the base-of-all, which as we have seen corresponds to rigpa-*qua*-Base and which, upon the subsequent manifestation of dualistic grasping (which is the condition for interpreting the experience as this or that), gives rise to experiences of the formless realms.

Furthermore, once the above condition in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are manifest is taken for the manifestation of rigpa *qua* Path or rigpa *qua* Fruit, rigpa *qua* Base has been taken as object and grasped at (so to say, for once it manifests as object it is no longer rigpa *qua* Base), and so what manifests is no longer the base-of-all, but an experience of the formless realms. I believe that as Watts recognized the

condition of the base-of-all, it turned into an experience of the formless realms, and therefore at the time he believed he was experiencing *nirvana* or Awakening he was actually having a samsaric experience.

¹⁸⁶ As stated in previous notes, I write, “identifies with” in order to keep the text simple. However, if I had to be more precise, I would have to resort to Sartrean terminology and specify that the subject *becomes* the object by establishing a *link of being* with it. (For an explanation of the concept of establishing a *link of being* with an object, see Sartre, Jean-Paul, 1943, 31st edition, 1980.)

¹⁸⁷ In normal life we feel we are our body, speech, mind, qualities and activities (or one or more of these elements), and so our ego is limited to these aspects of our persons. (The reasons why I say “or one or more of these” should be explained in great detail; since this cannot be done in a footnote, I will do so in my future book *Meditation on the Selflessness of Human Beings and of Phenomena that are not Human Beings*).

Conversely, in the *arupya-dhatu* we identify with something much larger than our person: a pseudo-totality that seems to be limitless rather than to have narrow limits. However, both in normal life and in the *arupya-dhatu* we identify (establish a *link of being*) with something we have taken as object, and then pretend there is no difference, distance or duality between the object and the subject. For a more extensive and in-depth discussion of this and in general of the errors of transpersonal and integral psychologies, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

¹⁸⁸ The energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness is what is referred to by the Sanskrit word *kundalini*, which corresponds to one of the two principal meanings of the Tibetan word *thig-le* (*thig-le*). Herbert V. Guenther uses the term “bioenergetic input,” which implies both a biological origin of energy and the duality between a “higher bioenergetic center” in the brain, and an energy current entering that center—and which seems to respond to von Neumann-like systems theories based on the concept of input/output, which Fritjof Capra and other so-called “New Paradigm” thinkers (cf., e.g., Anderson, W. T.; Callenbach, E.; Capra, F.; Spretnak, C.; Eds.; 1986) have deemed not to be truly holistic (these thinkers deem systems theories based on the concept of self-organization to be more in harmony with the Buddhist worldview; however, it would be a grave mistake to identify the views of Buddhism with those of systems theories based on that concept). Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that some of the most lucid exponents of the Dzogchen teachings (such as rigdzin Changchub Dorje, who was Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu’s root teacher) have noted that the system of subtle channels (*nadi* or *rtsa*) described by Tantric Buddhism in relation to practices for increasing the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness, conventionally may not be said to exist in an “objective” manner (as conventionally it may be said, for example, that the nervous system and the brain exist in this manner). In fact, in the different practices of *yantra yoga* and *tsa-lung-thigle* (*rtsa rlung thig-le*) associated with the stage of completion of the inner Tantras and involving the arousal of *kundalini*, the energetic system is visualized in different ways according to the effects sought. However, all of them produce the intended effects—which demonstrates that the energetic system exists in the Buddhist sense in which the criterion for existence is the production of effects.

The state of small time-space-knowledge, which is associated with a low energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness, is a state of restriction of the focus of consciousness in which it takes in only one fragment of the sensory continuum at a time, and has rather impermeable boundaries. This state is the condition of possibility of the functioning of delusion, for without it the fragmentary perception at the root of the illusion of substantial ontological multiplicity, the individual’s illusion of separateness, and the concealment that Sartre called bad faith and that Freud designated as repression, would not at all be possible.

Nevertheless, in order to overcome delusion, it is not enough to enlarge one’s space-time-knowledge: this will only produce illusory experiences of the type that Buddhists designate with the Tibetan term *nyam* (*nyams*), the Chinese word *mo-ching* and the Japanese word *makyo*, and which Sufis designate by the Arabic term *hal*. However, these experiences have their value; for example, the Dzogchen teachings compare the nondual Awake awareness called *rigpa* to a mirror, and the experiences of the practice (the most important of which are classified into those of nonconceptuality, those of clarity and those of pleasure) to reflections in the mirror that must be used for reGnizing the true condition of the latter (to this end, once the experiences of the practice manifest in a clear, vivid and powerful manner, specific instructions must be applied for using them in order to discover the true condition of the nondual Awake awareness of which they are functions). If, in the practice of Dzogchen, these experiences manifest and are automatically interpreted delusively in terms of the contents of delusorily valued-absolutized thoughts (as

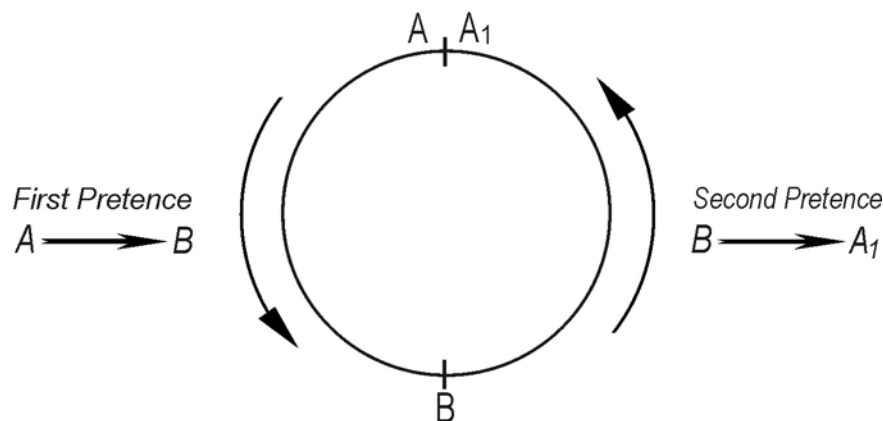
often happens due to the propensities at the root of *samsara*), a Dzogchen practitioner will reGnize these thoughts the way thoughts ought to be reGnized in that practice (*as* and *through* the state of rigpa or Truth, which is intrinsically all-liberating), so that they liberate themselves spontaneously, instantly disappearing in a spontaneous and natural way, like feathers entering fire.

The point is that, as we have seen, Awakening cannot be *produced*, for it (is) unconditioned and unmade (*asamskrita*). Therefore, in itself the increase of the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness resulting in an enlargement of space-time-knowledge cannot do away with delusion; it can give rise to conditions in which an individual who is prepared can do the practices that may eventually serve as contributory conditions for the spontaneous dissolution of delusion, but which in the individual who is not prepared can give rise to a temporary psychotomimetic experience of to a fully-fledged psychosis.

It happens that, as will be shown in the section dealing with the dynamic of the *mandala* in Part Three of this book, the expansion and permeabilization of consciousness may allow individuals to discover the insubstantiality, both of the entity that they believe themselves to be, and of the rest of the universe, and/or to apprehend ego-dystonic contents (i.e., contents that are incompatible with their own self-image)—all of which would threaten their ego functioning and sense of identity. Likewise, this expansion and permeabilization may cause one to experience in its nakedness the pain inherent to delusory valuation-absolutization—which may cause one to react with rejection and thus activate positive feedback loops (i.e., systemic loops which cause processes to increase from their own feedback) of pain and anguish and so on.

¹⁸⁹ Consider the diagram of Laing's spiral of pretences (Laing, Ronald D., 1961/1969):

"Elusion is a relation in which one pretends oneself away from one's original self; then pretends oneself back from this pretence so as to appear to have arrived back at the starting point. A double pretence simulates no pretence. The only way to "realize" one's original state is to forgo the first pretence, but once one adds a second pretence to it, as far as I can see, there is no end to the series of possible pretences. I am. I pretend I am not. I pretend I am. I pretend I am not pretending to be pretending..."



"The positions A and A₁ on the perimeter of the circle are separated by an impermeable barrier which is thinner and more transparent than one can imagine. Begin at A and move towards B. Instead of going back in a clockwise direction to A, continue in an anti-clockwise direction to point A₁. A and A₁ are 'so near and yet so far'. They are so close that one says: 'Is not A₁ just as good as A, if it is indistinguishable from A?'"

In the interpretation of the diagram I am making here, point A corresponds to the unveiling of our true condition in the self-reGnition of rigpa. If this is what one values, upon reaching A₁ one will think that one has arrived at A, for one will not be able to admit that what one has reached is but its imitation.

In turn, point B is our habitual condition marked by delusion, in which we delusorily value-absolutize the idea that we are the finite, limited entity that is designated by our name, which we believe to be distinct and separate from the rest of the universe.

Finally, point A₁ represents those conditions that may be confused with the Awakening represented by A, and in particular the states of the formless sphere that is the highest region of *samsara* (i.e., of experience marked by the delusion called *avidya*).

Though A is represented as *preceding* the genesis and development of delusion, as stated in the note dealing with the polemic between Wilber and Grof/Washburn, the reGnition of rigpa that makes our true condition patent is a wholly new event, rather than consisting in the return to a more wholesome and holistic

condition previous to the development of the spurious divisions that characterize deluded adults (as we have seen, ordinary individuals have not reGnized rigpa during infancy, in the bardo or in “previous lifetimes”). Therefore, the diagram should not be thought to represent the chronological development of delusion, but to express its development from a (meta-)ontological perspective.

At any rate, once we arrive at B we feel separate from the totality that is our true condition (or, in terms of twenty century physics, from the plenitude of the single energy field that the universe is), and therefore we experience the powerful sensation of “lack of plenitude” that has been discussed in the regular text of this book, which we try to fill by every means, often including spiritual methods. However, since we fiercely cling to the illusion of selfhood and this clinging has been vehemently cultivated by our conditioning, in our attempts to regain totality and plenitude by spiritual means we strive to maintain ourselves as truly existing selves; therefore, instead of returning to A, we would rather go ahead to A₁ by *becoming* (or, less precisely, by identifying with) our own conceptualization of a spurious totality produced by a limited panoramification of our focus of conscious attention.

Concerning the assertion that the reGnition of rigpa represented as A is a wholly new event rather than the return to a more wholesome condition experienced in the past, it is self-evident that the state of Awake individuals and that of babies are extremely different. Beside being unable to deal with life situations, babies are beclouded by *avidya* or marigpa in the first of the senses the term has in the threefold classification adopted here (which, as we have seen, is that of the *element of stupefaction that in Tibetan is called mongcha [rmongs-cha]*), and their experience is conditioned by a proto-dualism that, through their interaction with their parents and other adults, will develop into the second and third senses the term *avidya* or marigpa has in the threefold classification adopted here. Contrariwise, Awake individuals deal with life situations more effectively than deluded adults, for they maintain the learning achieved in the process of socialization and education, but have rid themselves of the self-hindering that issues from the delusorily valued self-consciousness illustrated by the centipede poem; being characterized by the self-reGnition of rigpa, they are totally free of all types of *avidya* or marigpa; and since they have entirely overcome dualism and neutralized (or burned) the seeds at the root of dualism, they cannot be conditioned to develop *samsara* again.

However, it is a fact that, as Norman O. Brown suggested in a different context and without referring to Laing’s diagram (which had not being conceived at the time), “returning to A” after having become fully conditioned adults may be compared to recovering what Freud called the “oceanic feeling,”* as well as the spontaneity and unselfconsciousness that characterizes infants. In fact, it was on the basis of the panoramic, spontaneous and unselfconscious character of *both* the experience of babies and the condition of Awake individuals, that the *Chuang-tzu* referred to the experience of the baby who (Giles, 1926, quoted in Watts, Alan, 1956):†

“...sees all things all day long without blinking; this is possible because his eyes are not focused on any specific object. He goes without knowing that he goes and stops without knowing what he is doing. He has no idea of separation with regard to his environment and moves along with it. These are the principles of mental health.

To conclude, it must be noted that the explanation in terms of the spiral of pretences is an exclusively *digital* interpretation of the process of spiritual ascension to spurious highs based on the interaction of a digital and an analog process (the first of which in males is associated with the cerebral hemisphere situated on the left and in females is associated with the hemisphere located on the right, and the second of which is located on the opposite side). Furthermore, that explanation is allegoric rather than literal, and so it would be absurd to try to establish the number of revolutions involved in any given process of spiritual ascension.

For a more detailed discussion of the above, cf. Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

* Freud believed the infant’s oceanic feeling implied a sensation of unsheltering and was at the root of religious sentiment, which he viewed as a means to elude that sensation. Though it is true that infants may experience a feeling of unsheltering in the period when their bio-energetic volume has not yet decreased to the levels necessary for adult normal ego-functioning, and when the oceanic feeling has not yet been obliterated, this unsheltering is not inherent in the oceanic feeling, but in the developing illusion of being a separate ego or self, as the ocean-like condition does not afford the latter the *illusory* shelter granted it by the narrow and hermetic focus of attention that is the condition of possibility of normal ego-functioning. Therefore, though I may view the feeling of unsheltering as a driving force toward building up a normal Freudian ego, I am appraising the oceanic feeling in a way that is closer to Norman O. Brown’s than to Freud’s.

†Another version is provided in Watson, B. (trans.), 1968, p. 253, according to which the baby...

“...stares all day long without blinking its eyes—it has no preferences in the world of externals. To move without knowing where you are going, to sit at home without knowing what you are doing, traipsing and trailing about with other things, riding along with them on the same wave—this is the basic rule of life-preservation...”

¹⁹⁰ In the Iron Age or *kaliyuga* (Age of Darkness or Black Age) individuals internalize a set of mutually conflictive criteria (for example, a Christian priest may tell a boy that when abused or assaulted he should “offer the other cheek,” but other boys will make it clear to him that the “right thing” to do is to strike back). Though initially most children are bound by the criteria espoused by their parents (which, in their turn, change from one set of parents to another), later on each individual produces his or her own synthesis of criteria, according to different circumstances (and yet in general the first criterion to bind an individual will continue to exert a crucial influence on him or her throughout his or her lifetime). I have discussed this in a series of other works, among which the first were Capriles, Elías, 1977 and Capriles, Elías, 1986.

However, even if we become convinced that, for example, killing rabbits in order to sell their meat is not bad, at the moment of killing the rabbit our natural sensitiveness will cause of to be aware that we are causing suffering and harm to a sentient being, and that this is a bad action; therefore, we will accumulate the corresponding negative *karma*.

¹⁹¹ What makes our actions create a cause that will have effects is that, at the moment of acting, the acting entity designated by our name becomes the object of our own consciousness, and we judge this object as a subject that is carrying out a good, bad or neutral act. When we judge ourselves as agents of a good act we accept ourselves; when we judge ourselves as agents of a bad act we reject ourselves’ and when we judge ourselves as agents of a neutral act we remain indifferent towards ourselves. Therefore, through this judgment we give rise to a good, bad or neutral self-image and to karmic propensities of the same sign—which in the future will cause one to accept oneself and thereby accept the whole of one’s experience, experiencing pleasure; to reject oneself and thereby reject the whole of one’s experience, experiencing pain; or to remain indifferent toward oneself and thereby toward the whole of one’s experience, experiencing a neutral sensation. Furthermore, an individual’s self-image determines his or her conduct: if the self-image is good according to a given criterion, the individual will tend to have a good behavior according that criterion; if it is bad, he or she will tend to have a bad behavior; etc.

The fact that the criteria on which we judge our actions somehow depend on a synthesis of the criteria of internalized others, rather than on universal abstract norms, does not imply a moral relativism. As stated in the preceding note, even those who are taught that acts that are harmful to others are good, know very well that they are evil, and this knowledge will condition their judgment of their own actions and therefore will determine the karmic result of their actions.

¹⁹² This is why it is said that the full ripening of karmas does not necessarily take place in the lifetime when the negative action was committed, or in the one immediately following, or even in the ones closely following this one, but may take place at any time—even many lifetimes after the bad action was committed.

It must be noted that one of the contributory conditions for the maturation of a negative karma may be a condition of wider space-time-knowledge in which the mechanisms of self-deceit cannot conceal the full extent of the pain produced by our rejection of sensations. In this condition, the manifestation of the habits of rejection may be the doorway to a rebirth in hell.

Likewise, the presence of certain pathogens may be a contributory condition for a very painful disease to manifest. And so on.

¹⁹³ Because of all that has been explained in the paragraph of the regular text to which the call for this note is appended, in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, I noted that, had a Dzogchen practitioner replied to Shen-hsiu, probably he or she would have written something like the following:

Freed from the illusory obstruction introduced by the *ahamkara* (self-grasping),
the nonexistent primordial mirror’s inherently all-liberating nature
is not hampered by an illusory subject’s clinging
and so all illusory dust liberates itself spontaneously upon arising.
If, contrariwise, one tried to clean the looking glass,
this would be a function of *ahamkara* (self-grasping)
that would impede spontaneous liberation, illusorily tainting the seeing glass
with the fictitious stains such “dirty cloth” would leave on it upon cleaning it.

¹⁹⁴ This may be read in at least two divergent ways. The first is in terms of the *Hetuyana* or “causal vehicle” (a term that refers to the *Sutrayana*, to which the *Surangama* and all other sutras belong), according to which Awakening is explained in terms of cause and effect. The second is in terms of the *Atiyogatantrayana*, according to which, to be truly unconditioned and unmade, Awakening has to be entirely beyond the cause-effect relation (however, to some extent the latter view may apply to the *Vajrayana*, to the sudden *Mahayana* and to the *Mahamadhyamaka* school of the *Mahayana*).

In the first context, the *Surangamasutra* should be interpreted as asserting that the cause of Awakening must be the unconditioned and unmade nature of all reality, which alone is not false or spurious. However, insofar as effects are by definition *produced*, causation always gives rise to something made and conditioned, which as such is false and spurious.

If this *sutra* were interpreted in terms of the second context (since the text does not belong to *Ati Dzogpa* Chenpo or even to the *Vajrayana*, this would be either an interpretation in terms of the sudden *Mahayana*, or one in terms of the *Mahamadhyamaka* school of the *Mahayana*), it would be saying that Awakening *cannot be caused*, for otherwise it would be conditioned and made.

Even though I have related this second interpretation (which is the perfectly flawless one) to some forms of the *Mahayana*, only *Ati Dzogpa* Chenpo could *implement* it thoroughly and perfectly. In fact, as expressed in Dudjom Rinpoche, English, 1991, vol. I, pp. 300-301:

“The Sugata (Shakyamuni), during the intermediate (i.e., the Second) Promulgation of the transmitted precepts (i.e., of the *Sutrayana*), did not reveal the structure of the fundamental reality, though he did extensively teach the inconceivable, abiding nature (consisting in the *dharmakaya*’s primordial emptiness) without referring to symbols of elaborate conception. And, during the final (i.e., the Third) Promulgation (of the *Sutrayana*), though he did reveal the structure of the fundamental reality, he did not teach the characteristic Path through which it is actualized. Therefore, the conclusive intention of the two promulgators (i.e., Nagarjuna and Asanga) actually abides without contradiction in the nature of Dzogchen.”

In fact, Dzogchen is the Path of spontaneous liberation, in which Awakening results from the spontaneous dissolution of the illusory nucleus of experience and action and of all that is spurious, conditioned and made, rather than from the action of the illusory nucleus of experience and action.

(It must be noted that the reference to Nagarjuna and Asanga as “the two promulgators” may be taken to suggest that, just as Nagarjuna revealed the sutras of the Second Promulgation, which Shakyamuni had left in the custody of the nagas, Asanga revealed the sutras of the Third Promulgation. However, though I have often found references to Nagarjuna as a revealer of Shakyamuni’s teachings, I have never found any analogous reference to Asanga.)

¹⁹⁵ Once in exile, the Nyingmapa Masters decided that in the new circumstances it would be convenient for their tradition to have a hierarchy, and chose Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigdräl Yeshe Dorje (*bDud-'joms Rin-po-che*, *'Jigs-'bral Ye-shes rDo-rje*), to occupy this post. After the death of Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (*Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse Rin-po-che*) was chosen as his successor to this office. And after the death of Dilgo Khyentse, Pema Norbu Rinpoche (*Pad-ma Nor-bu Rin-po-che*), whose name is abridged as Penor Rinpoche (*Pad-nor Rin-po-che*), was chosen to replace him.

¹⁹⁶ The avowed aim of this Path is the realization of absolute truth. In the *Mahayana*, most systems identify absolute truth with the twofold voidness (of persons and of phenomena other than persons); nevertheless, the *Prasangika* subschool, summit of the coarse, outer *Madhyamaka*, refuses to reduce the absolute to mere voidness. In turn, the *Mahamadhyamaka* School, and in general all of the subtle, inner *Madhyamaka*, understand absolute truth to be the inseparability of voidness and appearances (or, in the case of the Zhentongpa School, as that of voidness and awareness). However, according to the Nyingmapa, the Path that allows the individual to effectively attain this realization is not that of the *Mahayana*, but that of *Ati Dzogpa* Chenpo.

¹⁹⁷ According to the *Madhyamaka Prasangika* school, it is impossible to have a true realization of the voidness of human beings if one does not realize the voidness of phenomena that are not human beings, which include the aggregates the interaction of which gives rise to the illusion that human beings exist inherently.

¹⁹⁸ According to the Dzogchen teachings, the Base has three aspects. The ngowo (*ngo-bo*) aspect is voidness and corresponds to the mind aspect of the individual; in fact, its correct apprehension is the *dharmakaya*, which is the mind aspect of Buddhahood. The rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) aspect is clarity or luminosity, which manifests as the flow of experience, and corresponds to the voice or energy aspect of the individual; its correct apprehension is the *sambhogakaya*, which is the voice or energy aspect of Buddhahood. The thukje

(*thugs-rje*) aspect comprises the whole of manifest phenomena and corresponds to the body aspect of the individual; its correct apprehension is the *nirmanakaya*, which is the body aspect of Buddhahood.

- ¹⁹⁹ The aspects of the individual, which are mind, voice / energy, and body, may be said to manifest as the experiences of voidness, clarity, and pleasure, respectively. Therefore, though it is supposedly with the mind that we apply the concentration whereby we modify our vision, with regard to experiences it may be said that vision, which is a function of clarity, is a manifestation of our energy.

Furthermore, the transformation of vision that is the essence of the Path of transformation consists in perceiving ourselves and the whole of our dimension as *sambhogakaya* deities in their dimension (in particular, as the *sambhogakaya* deity that manifested to the *mahasiddha* who introduced into the human world the Tantric teaching we are practicing). The original *mahasiddha* was in the state in which the true condition of the level of energy or voice (Skt., *vak*; Tib., sung [*gsung*]) is realized, and for our transformation to become actual realization, we must find ourselves in the same state. Thus the visions of this Path arose from the realization of the true condition of the level of energy and are a method whereby practitioners can achieve this realization. (In Tibetan, the term sung [*gsung*] refers to the voice and corresponding aspect of Buddhahood; the voice and corresponding aspect of the existence of a sentient being trapped in *samsara* is referred to by the term ngag [*ngag*].)

(As we will see, the English term energy is used to translate various words. In the context of Tantrism it is used mainly for translating the Tibetan term lung [*rlung*], and in general for referring to the energetic aspect of our condition represented by the “voice,” which is the sense in which it is being employed in this note and in the discussion to which this note was appended. However, some authors have also used it to translate the Tibetan term thigle [*thig-le*], which in one of its senses refers to the basic energy of which lung is a dynamic manifestation. In the context of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu [who I follow also in this regard] uses the term for translating the term thukje [*thugs-rje*], which refers to the uninterrupted flow of phenomena, independently of whether these manifest in the dang [*gdangs*], rölpa [*rol-pa*] or tsel [*rtsal*] modes of manifestation of energy. While the first terms translated as energy [lung, ngag and sung] correspond to the voice, the next [thigle] corresponds in an important sense to the mind, and the last [thukje] corresponds to the body. However, in a sense it may be said that the voice or energy is a function of the mind, and that the body is a function of the voice or energy.)

- ²⁰⁰ As stated in the preceding note, here reference is being made to the level of energy in the sense the word is used when one talks about the body, energy or voice, and mind, rather in the sense it has when one talks about essence or ngowo (*ngo-bo*), nature or rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) and energy or thukje (*thugs-rje*).

- ²⁰¹ After the Indo-European invaders conquered India and subsequently mixed with the peoples they had conquered, they gave rise to the caste system in order to maintain the supremacy they had gained in the battlefield. The highest caste was that of the Brahmins, which had the highest percent of Indo-European blood and that conformed the priesthood, thereby having the highest privileges without having the duty to fight wars. The immediately inferior caste, which had less Indo-European blood, was that of the Kshatriyas, who constituted the political and warring class (i.e., the “nobility”). Then came the Vaishyas, with an even smaller proportion of Indo-European blood, who were traders and artisans. Finally there came the Shudras, who had a very small proportion of Indo-European blood and who were farmers and servants.

Orthodox Hindu traditions regard the Brahmins as being most highly endowed in the spiritual plane, followed by the Kshatriyas, then by the Vaishyas and finally by the Shudras. These traditions consider the dalits (the name used by untouchables to qualify their situation as an oppressed social group, by contrast with the term coined by Gandhi, which is *harijan* or “children of god”) as lacking a soul (in the sense of “presence of the divine”), for they regard them as not having been created from Purusha, the universal soul. In fact, according to the *Rigveda* (X. 90), Brahmins issued from the mouth of Purusha; Kshatriyas arose from Purusha’s arms; Vaishyas were formed from Purusha’s thighs; and Shudras arose from Purusha’s feet. Untouchables, with no proportion of Indo-European blood whatsoever, did not arise from any of the parts of Purusha’s body.

However, as we have seen, the nondual spirituality of India does not have its roots in the barbarian Indo-European invaders, but in the Dravidians (and even more so in the Tibeto-Burmese living on the slopes and plateaus of the Himalayas) they conquered and subjected. The pre-Indo-European Indian religion, which was Shaiva, deemed corporeal reality, including the body and its impulses, to be sacred, and to be the very vehicle to the realization of the divine; contrariwise, Indo-Europeans were anti-somatic and sternly repressed the Shaiva bacchanalia as a threat to their own political, social and economic power, and

even to the continuity of the existence of their descendants as separate social groups (more or less diluted according to the caste).

Tantrism represented a revival of pre-Indo-European traditions, and therefore the prejudices and antisomatism of the Brahmins made them least apt to practice Paths such as that of transformation and that of spontaneous liberation. The Kshatriyas were slightly more apt to practice these Paths, the Vaishyas more so, and the Shudras were most apt among caste Indians. Though some mahasiddhas, such as the great Sarahapada and others, came from Brahmin families, it was often among the lowest type of untouchables (the chandalas and chandalis, in charge of the disposal of corpses) that there arose the greatest mahasiddhas and realized beings.

This inversion of the traditional caste-structure was reflected in the Tantric appraisal of the spiritual capacity of the members of the different castes. With regard to the classification of the Tantras into four vehicles, as taught by the Sarmapa in Tibet, an unpublished manuscript by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu translated by Adriano Clemente states:

“In the *Shes-bya Kun-khyab* we read:

““There are four types of disciples of the Buddha: (1) those who appreciate to a greater extent external practices such as purification and ablutions, who desire to practice the Teaching in this way; (2) those who are more interested in the real meaning and less in external actions; (3) those who understand that external actions can be a source of distraction, and therefore dedicate themselves principally to meditation on the real inner meaning; and (4), those who rejoice in the enjoyments through the nondual wisdom of method and *prajña*.

““When these four types of disciple receive a Teaching, they become respectively followers of (1) *Kriya[tantra]*, (2) *Ubhaya[tantra]* [or *Charyatantra*], (3) *Yoga[tantra]*, and (4) *Anuttarayogatantra*.

““To transmit the Teaching to the four types of disciples in accordance with their inclinations there have therefore been imparted teachings related to the four types of *Tantra*: to those who feel greater attachment and lust, and who in the Hindu tradition are followers of the god Shiva, the method of the *Anuttaratantra* was transmitted; to those who are conditioned by anger, who in the Hindu tradition are followers of the methods linked to Vishnu, the method of the *Ubhayatantra* was taught; to those who are more obscured by ignorance, who traditionally follow the methods linked to Brahma, the *Kriyatantra* has been taught; to the individuals with undefined characteristics the *Yogatantra* was taught. These considerations are explained in the *De nyid 'Dus pa*, which contains the way of seeing of Masters such as Nagarjuna, *Rab 'byor bskyans* and others.”

“And furthermore:

““The (*Anuttarayogatantra* titled) *Dur khrod smad du byung ba rgyud* maintains that in order to discipline Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras with the Teaching, and to carry them onto the Path, the four series of Tantras were transmitted, namely the *Kriya[tantra]*, *Ubhaya[tantra]* or *Charyatantra*, *Yoga[tantra]* and *Anuttara[yoga]tantra*.

““The (*Tantra* titled) *rDor-je gur (mKha' 'gro ma dra ba rdo rje gur zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po)* states:

““To those with an inferior capacity the *Kriyatantra* was taught.

To those with a medium capacity the *Ubhayatantra* was taught.

To those with a superior capacity the *Yogatantra* was taught.

To those with a supreme capacity the *Anuttara[yoga]tantra* was taught’.”

²⁰² The principle of *Anuyoga* is instantaneous rather than gradual visualization, which is the principle of other, lower Tantric vehicles, including the *Mahayoga* of the Nyingmapa and the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the Sarmapa. In a situation like the one described here, only instantaneous lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) visualization will do, for in an unforeseen situation we cannot sit on the floor in order to develop a visualization step by step: we have to transform instantaneously and sustain the visualization with the energy of the anger, or else the method will not work. Furthermore, it is likely that the anger would not allow us to concentrate on the successive steps of the gradual process, so that if we succeeded in so doing, this would mean the anger has already passed and thus that we no longer have a passion to transform.

²⁰³ Even if they do not harm their present body during the fight, they will harm themselves insofar as they will create bad *karma* that will have negative effects for them in the future.

²⁰⁴ Coarse metals represent the passions and gold represents Awakening: the very examples that illustrate this Path show that its basic principle lies in transforming something (coarse metals) into something totally different (gold), rather than in directly discovering the true nature of what seemed to be “coarse metals”—which, as we will see, is the principle of the Path of spontaneous liberation.

As will be shown in a subsequent note, the risk involved in the “alchemic process” of the Path of transformation in the strictest sense of the term, is illustrated by the use in the alchemical process of a type of mercury called *makshika*: its application would be extremely risky for those who lack the necessary qualities.

²⁰⁵ *Amrita* is the condition for the passions to be transmuted into primordial gnosis. It is somehow related to the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt., *kundalini*; Tib., *thig-le*) and therefore in the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation it is represented by semen (however, when five amritas are referred to, *semen* is only one of them, and the symbolism expressed here does not fully apply). Reference is often made to a “nectar medicine or elixir” (dütsi men [*bdud-rtsi sman*]), or to a “nectar elixir or medicine of attainment” (dütsi mendrub [*bdud-rtsi sman-grub*]), which may have different levels of meaning.

Qua Base, *rakta* (Tib., *rak-ta*) consists in the passions that are to be transmuted into Awakening and that are compared to the firewood on which the fire of wisdom depends; *qua* Fruit, it represents Awake involvement in the world manifesting as a limitless flow of Awake, selfless, actionless activities.

²⁰⁶ As stated in a previous note, the *Yogachara* School, as well as the *Madhyamaka Swatantrika* School, assert that the absolute truth and final realization of the *Sutrayana* is that of voidness. However, according to *Mahamadhyamaka*, the absolute truth and final realization of the *Sutrayana* is the indivisibility of voidness and appearances. For a detailed explanation of this, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

²⁰⁷ This term is my own abbreviation of the compound name *Atiyogatantrayana* (which belongs to the language of Oddiyana; its Sanskrit equivalent is *Adiyogatantrayana*).

²⁰⁸ Dualistic delusion always involves tensions, which are inherent to the illusion of duality and cannot manifest without it. The point is that a conscious entity can only pull in a direction opposite to that in which an animate or inanimate force is pulling, or push in a direction contrary to that in which an animate or inanimate force is pushing, if it feels itself to be separate from this force. This is the reason why no degree of tension whatsoever can manifest when delusion dissolves and the nondual condition becomes perfectly evident, and why the instant transition from delusion to Truth results in a sudden, absolute relaxation of body, speech and mind, in a way that has been compared to the fall of firewood sticks when the rope tying them breaks. (Of course, if necessary to benefit beings, totally Awake individuals can oppose animate or inanimate forces; however, they would not do so out of delusion, but as a function of spontaneous compassionate responsiveness.)

²⁰⁹ In the Path of transformation, the order in which the kayas are realized is said to be *nirmanakaya-sambhogakaya-dharmakaya-swabhavikaya* (the latter term referring to the inseparability of the three kayas). However, as stated in a previous note and as will be shown in the regular text in subsequent chapters, according to the teachings of the Path of spontaneous liberation consisting in Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, the final realization of the Path of transformation, which the latter calls *swabhavikaya*, corresponds to the realization of the *dharmakaya* as obtained in the Path of spontaneous liberation, of which we must have a first glimpse in order to begin treading this Path in the true sense of the expression.

The Path of spontaneous liberation goes much further than the Path of transformation, for it allows practitioners to consolidate the realization of the true *dharmakaya* and then, through its exclusive usage of energy (in particular, of the *rölpa* [*rol-pa*] mode of manifestation of energy), based on the principle of lhundrub or spontaneity, to expand this realization, so that they may realize the true *sambhogakaya* and the true *nirmanakaya*, and therefore they may consolidate the true *swabhavikaya*.

²¹⁰ See the preceding note.

²¹¹ We have seen that those manifestations of the principle of lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) consisting in the systemic positive feedback loops that activate themselves as contradiction turns into conflict, and which result in the spontaneous liberation of both contradiction and conflict as tensions instantly break of their own accord, have their paradigmatic expression in the practice of Thögel (*thod-rgal*). However, they can also activate themselves and play a role in the practice of Tekchö (*khregs-chod*)—especially in the context of the Nyingthik (*snying-thig*), which focus on Tekchö but does not radically separate this practice from that of Thögel.

²¹² The realization of rigpa corresponds to the final realization of the Path of transformation, which this Path identifies as the *swabhavikaya*, but which, as stated in note before last, in the Path of spontaneous liberation is considered to be the initial realization of the *dharmakaya* that marks the true beginning of this Path. The Path of spontaneous liberation begins at this point because its function is to consolidate the realization of the *dharmakaya*, and then expand it by including the subsequent realizations of the

sambhogakaya and, finally, the *nirmanakaya*. Once the three kayas become simultaneously manifest and functional, the true *swabhavikaya* has consolidated.

²¹³ This principle, which in the Dzogchen teachings is the counterpart of that of *katak* (*ka-dag*), will be considered in greater detail in Part Two of this book.

²¹⁴ In a different context, the principle behind this kind of systemic activity was explained in Bateson, Gregory, 1972, in terms of the relation between the mental processes associated with the two brain hemispheres. The one that in males is located on the right and that in females is situated on the left, is analog and corresponds to what in Freud, Sigmund, original work published 1895, Spanish edition used 1974, is called primary process. The one that in males lies on the left and that in females lies on the right, is digital and corresponds to what Freud called secondary process.

The code of primary process, being analog, cannot entertain negatives, and thus cannot say “no” to wayward function-relations; therefore, it is utterly unable to uproot them at will. Hence the only way to surpass wayward function-relations in this process is by developing them to the extreme at which, incapable to “stretch” any further, they simply break like a rubber band that is stretched beyond its maximum resistance. In the practice of the Dzogchen Menngagde (*Man-ngag-sde*) this break-up of function-relations takes place after the application of some specific ways of questioning experience and of looking into coarse or subtle thoughts (or into supersubtle thought structures): the application of these is the condition that allows that break-up to result in the unveiling of the true condition of thoughts, which is the manifestation of the *dharmakaya* aspect of Awakening, rather than being a worldly therapeutic break-up (for an exposé of the distinction between worldly therapeutic break-up and superworldly therapeutic break up, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols.).

It is the activation of a positive feedback loop that results in the exacerbation of what must be surpassed. This loop is activated by the organism’s discomfort because the discomfort causes digital secondary process, which does entertain negation, to reject it. Conscious awareness, which normally functions in terms of the coding of secondary process, cannot cause primary process, the code of which does not entertain negation, to negate and interrupt a wayward dynamic; however, it effectively modifies the dynamic of primary process in what is a paradigmatic instance of the law of inverted effect. When consciousness negates a wayward dynamic and tries to interrupt it, in primary process this negation, and the concerned attention paid to the function-relation that consciousness is trying to interrupt, do nothing but place a special emphasis on the function-relation that is being negated—which feeds that function-relation, reinforcing it instead of interrupting it. (In well-adapted individuals who do not exaggerate too much in their attempts to control their impulses and emotions, consciousness, functioning in terms of digital, secondary process, *a great deal of the time* feels in control of analog, primary process; however, this is not the case in those who obsessively and uninterruptedly try to control analog, primary process.)

In particular, if we try to interrupt a relation of rejection and opposition, the “no” that digital, secondary process gives that relation, being an instance of rejection, will reinforce the relation of rejection that we are trying to interrupt. As we have seen, pleasure results from accepting sensation, pain results from rejecting sensation, and neutral feelings are produced by remaining indifferent to sensation. Therefore, relations of rejection always give rise to unpleasant sensations, which are intensified by our rejection of those relations and/or sensations—causing our rejection to increase, which causes unpleasantness to increase, which makes our rejection further increase, and so on, so that a positive feedback loop gives rise to a self-catalyzing process (i.e., a process that increases from its own feedback).

The Dzogchen *Atiyoga* makes the most skillful use of the above principle and dynamic; for a detailed explanation of how it does so, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2007, 3 vols..

²¹⁵ This book was concealed as a terma as it became clear that later on the classification of Buddhist vehicles into *Hinayana*, *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana* would replace the one into Path of renunciation, Path of transformation and Path of spontaneous liberation: since in the long run this would cause the ancient way of classifying vehicles into Paths to be forgotten, it was necessary that, when the times were ripe for the reception of the older classification, it could be disseminated and made accessible to Buddhist practitioners and scholars.

²¹⁶ Namkhai Nyingpo was a direct disciple of Padmasambhava; in fact, he was one of the twenty-five main direct disciples of the Lotus-born or “25 of Chimpu,” as well as one of the “most fortunate eight,” each of whom received one of the eight *Mahayoga* sadhanas in Tregugeu. In his turn, though some sources tell us Nubchen Sangye Yeshe also was a direct disciple of the *Guru* from Oddiyana, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche favors the sources according to which this important Master was a third generation spiritual descendent of

Padmasambhava. In any case, it is a fact that Namkhai Nyingpo's *Kathang Dennga* (*bLa'-thang sDe-lnga*) is quoted in Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's *Samten Migdrön* [*bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*: Tibetan Text 1]); therefore, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the former is earlier than the latter.

²¹⁷ In order to make a schematic classification of the vehicles it was quite convenient to establish a correspondence between the outer Tantras and the Path of purification. However, strictly speaking, the *Yogatantrayana*, which is classified with the outer Tantras, as its very name suggests is a *yogic* Path that to some degree applies the principle of the Path of transformation. And yet, insofar as it also applies the principle of purification of the outer Tantras, to the extent of being classified as an outer *Tantra*, it cannot be regarded as belonging to the Path of transformation properly speaking. Thus the correct view in this regard is that the *Yogatantrayana* combines the principle of purification proper to the outer Tantras with the principle of transformation of the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation, and as such lies between the Path of purification and the Path of transformation.

²¹⁸ The passions included among the three nonvirtuous actions related to the mind (which together with the three non-virtuous actions related to the body and the four non-virtuous actions related to the voice make up the ten non-virtuous actions) are: craving other people's property, and malevolence. The other nonvirtuous action pertaining to the mind is wrong view, which obviously is not a passion (though it may be conducive to the manifestation of harmful passions).

²¹⁹ The *preta* (Tib., *yidag* [*yi-dvags*]) are beings with voracious appetites who are unable to satiate them. Some of them are represented as having enormous stomachs but tiny mouths and thread-like necks (hence their incapacity to satiate their hunger and thirst); when they succeed in getting food, it appears to them as disgusting substances like pus and blood. Some are said to be able to eat a little, but then the food burns their stomachs as though it were molten iron. Etc.

They are said to have too good a *karma* to be born in hell, but too bad a *karma* to be born as an *asura* (antigod, titan or demigod); their existence results mainly from greed, but also from envy and jealousy. The term *preta* is generally translated into English as "hungry ghosts;" however, attending to Greek mythology, some authors have translated it as "Tantaluses."

²²⁰ Each of the three "baskets" which are the *Sutra Pitaka*, the *Abhidharma Pitaka*, and the *Vinaya Pitaka* contains 21.000 sections, and so together they contain 63.000 sections. Thus when we add the 21.000 sections of the *Tripitaka* (this time understanding the term in a narrower sense), we have the famous 84.000 sections of the teachings that Shakyamuni communicated on the *nirmanakaya* level.

²²¹ These four factors are: (1) the abandoning of nonvirtuous phenomena already generated; (2) the nongeneration of nonvirtuous phenomena not yet generated; (3) the increase of virtuous phenomena already generated; and (4) the generation of virtuous phenomena not yet generated.

²²² As we have seen, Chinese schools such as *Hua-yen* and *T'ien-t'ai* combine the sudden and gradual method in an approach that they designate as "round" or total. The Chinese *Nirvana* School also refers to a "sudden" Awakening, and, as we have seen, the Pure Land School, in spite of not being a "sudden" school, is prolific in "sudden Awakenings." Nevertheless, we will not consider these schools at this point, for most of them seem not to have had an active presence in Tibet in the time period when the system that is presented here was codified (with the possible exception of the Pure Land school, from which, as stated by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in *Guru Rinpoche* according to Karma Lingpa, Trungpa, Chögyam and Francesca Fremantle, translators, 1975, the practice of *phowa* [*pho-ba*] *nirmanakaya* style applied in the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism might have been assimilated).

²²³ Actually, the *Hinayana* often refers to the shravakas as shravakabuddhas. In this case the three possible realizations of the *Sutrayana* are that of shravakabuddhas, that of pratyekabuddhas and that of (Anuttara-)Samyaksambuddhas.

²²⁴ This explanation of the view of the shravakas, as well as the following explanation of the view of the pratyekabuddhas, is that found in the Dzogchen teachings, which to a great extent coincides with that found in texts of the *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara* School of the *Mahayana*.

²²⁵ The original texts of the shravakas compare both theories—that of the nihilists and that of the eternalists or substantialists—to mistaking a rope for a snake, and so when expounding the views of the shravakas, Padmasambhava takes up this example in Tibetan Text 6. However, it seems more precise to say that the theories of the eternalists or substantialists are like mistaking a rope for a snake, because they involve taking something to be more serious or important than it actually is, and that the theories of the nihilists are like mistaking a snake for a rope, insofar as they involve taking something to be less dangerous, serious or important than it really is (as a result of which they may ripe results that may be far more serious than

being bitten by a venomous snake upon grabbing it as a consequence of having taken it for a rope, for they are not limited to the present life).

²²⁶ Adriano Clemente gives us a classification of these in terms of the five aggregates (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 150, note 114):

“The twelve bases (*ayatana*; *skye mched*), literally ‘that arise and develop’, form another classification parallel to those of the *skandhas* and of the *dhatu*s. In this case, for example, the seven constituents (*dhatu*) of consciousness are contained within the base (*ayatana*) of the mind.”

²²⁷ The Buddhist teachings generally refer to these as the “six consciousnesses;” however, in terms of the concept of consciousness that is reflected by Western languages, it may be more precise to explain them as the specific capacities of a single consciousness to perceive six different types of objects through six different “doors” (the five senses universally recognized, plus the mental sense that presents thoughts and related mental objects).

²²⁸ In this case, the term *dhatu* or kham (*kham*s) refers to the eighteen sense constituents, corresponding to the six senses (the five that are universally admitted plus the one that presents “mental” contents), the six sensory objects (of the senses that were just listed), and the six (modes of) consciousness arising from perception through the six senses. In other contexts, the same Sanskrit and Tibetan terms refer to other sets of elements:

(2) The three (*loka*)*dhatu* or kham, which are the *kamadhatu* or realm of sensuality, the *rupadhatu* or realm of form and the *arupyadhatu* or realm of formlessness. (Since some times the term *kham*s *gsum* may be used as a synonym of the terms *srid gsum* and ‘*jig-rten gsum*’, it is important to remark that normally *srid gsum* refers to the realm of gods above, that of *nyen* [*gnyan*] in the middle and that of *nagas* below.)

(3) The five gross *dhatu* or kham, which are the four elements corresponding to the four states of matter and the four functions of existence (solid state and function of supporting = “earth;” liquid state and function of concentrating = “water;” igneous state and function of ripening = “fire;” and gaseous state and function of moving = “air;”), plus a fifth element which consists in the space in which the four other elements manifest, and corresponds to the function of giving space.

(4) The six *dhatu* or kham, which are the five elements listed as (2), plus a sixth element, which is consciousness.

Besides, as stated in a previous note, the six *loka* or *gati* (Skt., *sadgati* or *sadloka*) in Tibetan are also called the “six kham” or the “jigtenyi kham drug” [*jig-rten-gyi kham drug*])—which, as we have seen, are: the realm of the gods, the realm of antigods or titans, the realm of humans, the realms of craving spirits or Tantaluses, the realms of animals, and the realm of purgatories.

²²⁹ As shown earlier in the regular text, the *Theravada* was not one of the Eighteen Schools of the Buddhism based on the First Promulgation, but arose after the latter.

²³⁰ We have already seen quite briefly how the eighteen schools of what the *Mahayana* calls *Hinayana* developed. (For further information, see Gö Lotsawa Zhönnupel, English translation G. N. Roerich, 2d English Ed., 1976, pp. 27-33. An extremely brief account is provided in Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991.) Concerning the *Vaibhashika* and the *Sautrantika*, the reader may consult Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

²³¹ Prasangikas are supposed to reject this view and assert that the absence of a self-nature in persons cannot be realized independently of the absence of a self-nature in phenomena other than persons: either *both of them* are realized, or *none of them* is realized. In Chandrakirti’s [Auto]commentary to the “Supplement to (Nagarjuna’s) ‘Treatise on the Middle Way’,” we read (Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, p. 172):

“Because of error due to apprehending an intrinsic entity in forms and so forth, [shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, both of whom follow *Hinayana* tenets] do not realize even the selflessness of persons. This is because they are apprehending [as inherently existent] the aggregates that are the basis of designation of the self. [Nagarjuna’s *Precious Garland* (*Rin chen phreng ba*, *Ratnavali*, 35 ab)] says:

As long as one conceives the aggregates [to be inherently existent]

So long does one conceive an [inherently existent] I with respect to them.

²³² Reference to this is made in note after next.

²³³ In particular, they are said to reject the idea that physical entities are constituted by indivisible atoms existing absolutely on their own right (Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 159). Therefore, as stated in the following note, they assert the voidness of all those phenomena that, not being human beings, have form and are normally regarded as being material, and therefore they posit the voidness of the aggregate of form, and of the ten bases and ten sense constituents tied to form (see following note).

Besides, they realize the emptiness of what is known as “imperceptible form” (see following note). However, among phenomena that are not human beings, or aspects of phenomena that are not human beings, with the exception of “imperceptible form” they do not realize the voidness of those phenomena or aspects that do not involve material form and that therefore are not regarded as being constituted by atoms—such as the four skandhas other than *rupa*, and the sense bases and sense constituents that do not involve material form (see following note).

In short, they fail to realize the voidness of all five skandhas; therefore, according to the Prasangikas they not only fail to fully realize the selflessness of phenomena other than persons, but also fail to fully realize the selflessness of persons.

²³⁴ Rongzompa (Tibetan Text 4) says that pratyekabuddhas understand the absence of substance solely in the aggregate of form (and not in the next 4) and in the 10 sense bases and 10 sense constituents tied to form (the reasons for this were discussed in the preceding note), as well as in imperceptible form, which is one modification that arises in the process of realization. In note 122 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 155, Adriano Clemente writes:

“To summarize: the pratyekabuddhas accede to (realization of) the absence of a self or independent self-nature (*bdag med*) in the aggregate of form, as regards the classification of the five *skandhas*; in the ten internal and external bases (*ayatana*) linked to the five senses, as regards the classification of the twelve *ayatana*s; in the ten constituents (*dhatu*) that comprise the five sense faculties and the five sense objects, as regards the classification of the eighteen *dhatu*s. All of this pertains to the sense sphere. As regards the aspect of consciousness and of the phenomena that constitute its object, there are the two ‘bases’ of the mind and phenomena and the eight ‘consciousnesses’ that include the seven *dhatu*s derived from the aggregate of consciousness plus the constituent of phenomena or mental contents (*chos kyi khams*): in terms of all of these the pratyekabuddhas acknowledge the absence of a self only in ‘imperceptible form’ (*rig byed ma yin pa*’i *gzugs*), the eleventh component of the aggregate of form, a term that indicates a kind of alteration of one’s individual structure determined by a precise will: taking a vow, for example, is a physical and verbal act, but its effect persists within the person; this ‘alteration’ that takes place is called ‘imperceptible form’.”

The fact that pratyekabuddhas do not acknowledge the absence of a self or independent self-nature (*bdag med*) in many nonmaterial phenomena and in many phenomena belonging to the sphere of consciousness (such as the four skandhas that do not involve material form, the two bases [*ayatana*] and constituents [*dhatu*] that consist in the objects of the mental consciousness and the sense that apprehends these objects, various *dhatu*s derived from the aggregate of consciousness and so on), is no doubt related to the fact that, according to some texts (e.g., Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 159) pratyekabuddhas hold the idea that the supposedly internal, subjective consciousness does indeed exist in truth.

(In order to better understand the meaning of the above explanation by Adriano Clemente, it is advisable to consider the following classification of the eighteen constituents in terms of the five aggregates that the same scholar gives us in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 150, note 114:

“The eighteen constituents [*khams*; *dhatu*] include ten constituents pertaining to the aggregate of form: the five sense faculties plus the five sense objects; seven constituents pertaining to the aggregate of consciousness: the six consciousness plus the mental constituent [*yid kyi khams*, synonymous with *yid kyi dbang po*] by which is intended the cognitive faculty that ensues on the cessation of one of the six consciousnesses, plus the constituent of phenomena [*chos kyi khams*] or ‘mental contents’ that embraces the aggregates of sensation, of perception and of mental formations as well as ‘imperceptible form’ and non-composite phenomena.”)

²³⁵ An example of a pratyekabuddha who lived at a time when there was neither Buddha, nor *dharma*, nor *samgha*, and who, nonetheless, attained realization by meditating on the twelve links of interdependent origination, is the man who spontaneously identified the twelve links after finding a skeleton. This finding led him to think of old age and death (*jaramarana*: the twelfth link of interdependent origination), and then to identify, as the cause of *jaramarana*, *jati* or birth—these two being “the links that constitute the result of the causes of existence.” Then he went on to identify the tenth link (*bhava* or becoming), followed by the ninth (*upadanaskandha* or attachment to the *skandha*) and the eighth (*trishna* or desire)—these being “the three links that constitute the causes of existence.” Then he identified the seventh link (*vedana* or sensation), followed by the sixth (*sparsha* or sensory contact), the fifth (*sadayatana* or sense bases) and the fourth (*namarupa* or name-and-form)—these being “the four links that constitute the result of the determining causes.” Then he identified the third link (*vijñāna* or consciousness), then the second

(*samskara* or repetitive mental formations), and finally the first (*avidya* or ignorance)—these being “the first three links, which constitute the determining causes.” Thus the man identified the twelve links and, by meditating on them, attained the realization of a *pratyekabuddha* without having received teachings in that lifetime.

²³⁶ A partial exception to this is the *Pratyekabuddhayana*, for, as we have seen, on the one hand it admitted the nonexistence of some aspects of phenomena that are not human beings, and on the other it was accused of not fully realizing the selflessness of human beings (insofar as it supposedly holds that the supposedly internal, subjective consciousness exists in truth [cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 159]).

²³⁷ Obviously, this explanation is not admissible to the Prasangikas—who, as stated in a previous note, assert that the selflessness of persons cannot be truly realized if the selflessness of phenomena other than persons is not realized.

²³⁸ For example, a *Hinayana* monk avoids the arousing of desire by eluding women, and prevents the manifestation of anger by keeping from engaging in worldly dealings. Contrariwise, a *Mahayana* layman (*upashaka*) lives in the world; if “unlawful” desire arises in his mind, he will try to neutralize it by visualizing the woman as though he could see through her body and perceive a heap of bones, muscles, fat, blood, mucus, mucosa, organs, excrement and so on; if he gets angry at someone who wronged him, in order to neutralize the anger he will develop compassion by thinking the person did so because he or she is possessed by delusion and, as a result, is suffering in *samsara*. The principle behind this is that a single mind cannot simultaneously entertain two different attitudes to an object, and thus that disgust puts an end to desire, just as compassion puts an end to anger, etc.

In the gradual *Mahayana*, the principle of training consists in trying to *produce* the qualities proper to Awakening through the application of antidotes to the vices or defects that are their opposites. As remarked in the regular text, this is contrary to the principle of the sudden *Mahayana*, in which the qualities of Awakening arise spontaneously as a result of Awakening itself.

²³⁹ Cf. The *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra* or *Sutra Spoken by Vimalakirti* (Tib., *Dri ma med par grangs pas bstan pa'i mdo*; Chin., *Wei-mo-ching*; Jap., *Yuimagyo*), which reveals the lifestyle of this Lichchavi of the Indian city of Kapilavastu (which in the time of Shakyamuni was the capital of the kingdom of the Shakyas and where the Kingdom's heir, Gautama Siddhartha—who later became the Buddha of our age—lived until his decision to seek Awakening).

²⁴⁰ Since the teachings of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* interpret the three aspects consisting of the *dharmakaya*, the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya* in a different, more specific way than both those of the *Mahayana* and those of the *Vajrayana*, they will be explained in some detail from the standpoint of that teachings in Part Two of this book, which deals with the *Atiyogatantrayana*.

²⁴¹ As stated in a note to Chapter One, the word “phenomenon” is derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, meaning, “that which appears.” In a Buddhist context, it seems appropriate to interpret “that which appears” as referring to the deceptive appearances that characterize *samsara* and that veil the true condition of reality. Contrariwise, *nirvana*, even though it involves the sense data that constitute the *basis* of appearances, insofar as it involves the transcendence of all false appearances and the perfect realization of the true condition of reality, in a special sense may be regarded as being beyond “that which appears.” Because of this, I preferred not to speak of the phenomena of *nirvana*, but of the metaphenomenon or the series of metaphenomena of *nirvana* (according to the standpoint we adopt).

²⁴² Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu writes (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 108):

“There are in fact two ways to enact *bodhichitta*, respectively of intention and in action (Note by A. Clemente: in Tibetan *smon pa sems bskyed* and *'jug pa sems bskyed* [respectively]). ‘*Bodhichitta* of intention’, linked to meditation on the Four Immeasurables, is based on an aspiration that is similar to that of a person who wants to travel in a certain country. ‘*Bodhichitta* in action,’ on the other hand, consists in actually developing the true conduct of a *bodhisattva* through [the] gradual training in the Paramitas or ‘perfections’ that will be explained below. Thus whoever cultivates this is comparable to a person who, after having planned a journey, finally sets off. By means of the two *bodhichittas*, of intention and in action, you should train with great zeal to enable pure *bodhichitta* to arise within you.”

²⁴³ The order in which Indian Master Atisha Dipankara Shri *Jñāna* taught the “Four Immeasurables” in Tibet during the sarma (*gsar-ma*) or “new” diffusion of the teachings was: (1) love, (2) compassion, (3) joy and (4) equanimity. A well established and ancient Nyingmapa (*rNying-ma-pa*) tradition that at some point was codified by Andzam Drugpa (A-'dzam 'Brug-pa) in Tibetan Text 7 insists that if immeasurable equanimity is not present from the very onset of the development of the other three qualities, these could

as well fall into partiality (i.e., they could be directed to some individuals to a greater extent than to others); therefore, it is possible that they never become genuine immeasurables. See Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 113.

It is important to keep in mind that the four qualities that the *Mahayana* designates as “immeasurable catalysts of Awakening” also exist in *Hinayana* Buddhism—even though in the latter they do not conform a particular grouping. If they are considered as a distinctive characteristic of the *Mahayana*, it is only because in this later vehicle they occupy a much more central place and are emphasized to a much higher degree than in the *Hinayana*.

²⁴⁴ In fact, the practice of immeasurable equanimity is an antidote to the attitudes of attachment and aversion. The practice of immeasurable love or loving kindness is an antidote, among other things, to thinking of oneself first and working for one’s well being at the expense of that of others. The practice of immeasurable compassion is an antidote to the rejection of suffering, and in particular of the suffering of others, which normally we wish to shun—and together with that of loving-kindness is an antidote to aversion in general. Finally, the practice of immeasurable, sympathetic joy or rejoicing for the good actions, qualities and positive circumstances of others is an antidote to jealousy/envy and competitiveness in relation to others.

²⁴⁵ Note 124 by Adriano Clemente to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 reads:

“The *paramita* of method (*thabs*) refers to the dedication of one’s merit to the Enlightenment of all beings; the *paramita* of force (*stobs*) signifies no longer being conditioned by adversities and negative forces; the *paramita* of aspiration (*smön lam*) means intensely wishing in all future lives never to separate from *bodhichitta* and to practice the paramitas for the benefit of beings; the *paramita* of wisdom (*ye shes*) indicates genuine understanding of emptiness, the true nature of phenomena.”

In order to make the above more specific, it must be remarked that the *paramita* of method implies the perfecting of the spontaneous skillful means that developed with great power since one became a superior *bodhisattva* and the ten levels (*bhumi* or *sa*) previous to full Awakening began succeeding each other: as one acquires greater confidence in the Vision that initially manifested in the first level, one’s skillful means become more spontaneous, sharper and far more powerful.

The *paramita* of force involves even greater confidence in the Vision; it implies that one’s actions respond solely to the needs of others, and that they do so more unselfconsciously than ever.

The *paramita* of aspiration implies an even lesser concern with oneself, as well as the optimization of the natural arising of all-embracing transcendent wishes (which, as they manifest, may put every one of one’s hair on end).

The *paramita* of primordial gnosis or wisdom (*jñāna* or *yeshe* [*ye-shes*]) cannot be reduced to the mere understanding of emptiness, which is a function of the *paramita* of *prajñā*. In fact, the *paramita* of primordial gnosis or wisdom implies the unveiling of absolute truth: the true condition of reality, which is inexpressible and cannot be reduced to mere emptiness, so that at best it would have to be expressed in *Mahamādhyamika* terms as the indivisibility of emptiness and appearances. (However, as noted in the discussion of Ch’an or Zen, this realization is different from that of Dzogchen, for even at this point the *katak* [*ka-dag*] aspect of the Base to some extent is privileged over its *lhundrub* [*lhun-grub*] aspect.)

²⁴⁶ The *paramita* of generosity is applied as an antidote to miserliness, avarice and endeavoring for one’s well-being at the expense of that of others; the *paramita* of moral discipline is an antidote to debauchery, disrespect, mindlessness and so on; the *paramita* of forbearance is applied as an antidote to impatience, rebelliousness and aversion in general; the practice of the *paramita* of perseverance is an antidote to laziness and indolence; the *paramita* of stable mental absorption is applied as an antidote to distraction and the monkey mind; the practice of the *paramita* of discriminating wisdom is an antidote to wrong view, ignorance, bewilderment and delusion. (Etc.)

²⁴⁷ As stated in a previous note, these four factors are: (1) the abandoning of nonvirtuous phenomena already generated; (2) the nongeneration of nonvirtuous phenomena not yet generated; (3) the increase of virtuous phenomena already generated; and (4) the generation of virtuous phenomena not yet generated.

²⁴⁸ The *Mahayana* description of the four stages of this path is as follows: (1) heat (*ushmagata*) involves having a nonconceptual apprehension of *tathata* (the true constituent of all entities); (2) peak (*murdhan*) means one has reached the point at which the virtuous roots (*kushala-mula*) one has cultivated cannot decrease or disappear, and the apprehension of *tathata* becomes clearer; (3) forbearance (*kshanti*) implies that by becoming increasingly familiar with the concept of emptiness one overcomes the fear of it, and that the doors of lower realms are irreversibly closed; (4) supreme mundane qualities (*laukikagra-dharma*)

- signifies one has actualized the highest qualities of mundane existence and become prepared to enter the supramundane Path—i.e., to gain access to the third path, which is the *darshana marga* or Path of Seeing. Since we are referring to the *Mahayana*, the fear that is overcome in the third stage has as its object the emptiness of the *Mahayana*, which is the twofold voidness of both persons and phenomena-that-are-not-persons (both of which, in the case of the *Madhyamaka* School, may be either coarse or subtle). The *Mahayana* conception of voidness will be considered in the section on the gradual *Mahayana*; a more thorough elucidation, discussing the conceptions of voidness held by the different schools of the *Mahayana*, is given in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.
- ²⁴⁹ In the sudden or instantaneous *Mahayana*—*Ch'an* or *Zen*—the wisdom called absolute *prajña* (or, in terms of the ten paramitas, *jñāna*) must also manifest at a given moment. One of the essential differences between the instantaneous approach and the gradual one lies in the fact that the former does not require the practitioner to begin by accumulating merits or by developing relative *bodhicitta* through the contrived practices of the *bodhicitta* of intention (the four immeasurable catalysts of Awakening) and the *bodhicitta* of action (the six or ten *paramita*). Likewise, in the instantaneous *Mahayana* it is not considered that the *rupakaya* (the Buddha-body of form consisting of the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*) will manifest as a *result* of the accumulation of merits: it is held that in the state of Contemplation the three kayas or Buddhist “bodies” are already manifest, and thus that there is nothing to be produced by means of the “two accumulations.” In turn, the practitioner’s responsibility is not to allow the manifestation of delusion and relative truth to veil absolute truth upon rising from a session of Contemplation. (All these concepts will be explained gradually in this section.)
- ²⁵⁰ Just as in the *Shravakayana* the path of Vision marks the entrance into the “stream,” in the *Mahayana* the transition to the path of Vision is the entrance to the Path in a truer sense—or, which is the same, to the *True Path*.
- ²⁵¹ It was the *Madhyamaka* School, founded by Nagarjuna and his disciple Aryadeva (Kanadeva in the *Sutra of Hui-neng*), that developed the teachings on voidness or emptiness into a quite subtle system of philosophy to serve as the conceptual counterpart to the practice of the *Mahayana* path, explaining it as absence of self-existence (*swabhava shunyata*)—and in particular as the absence of *both* the coarse and the subtle self-existence, of *both* persons and phenomena other than persons. At an early stage, the *Madhyamaka* divided into the *Prasangika* School and the *Swatantrika* Schools (the latter comprising the *Swatantrika-Sautrantika* and two types of *Swatantrika-Yogachara*). Later on, the Uma Zhentongpa (*dbu-ma gzhan-stong-pa*) and the *Mahamadhyamaka* (Tib., Uma Chenpo [*dbu-ma chen-po*]) subschools of *Madhyamaka* came to be widely recognized as such; they referred to their own systems as the inner, subtle *Madhyamaka* (Tib., Nang Trawe Uma [*nang phra-ba'i dbu-ma*]), and called the rest of *Madhyamaka* schools “coarse, outer *Madhyamaka* (Tib., Ch'i Ragpe Uma [*phyi rags-pa'i dbu-ma*])” or “*Madhyamaka* of the Emptiness of Self-Existence” (Tib., Uma Rangtongpa [*dbu-ma rang-stong-pa*]; Skt., *swabhava shunyata Madhyamaka*). This terminology was due to the fact that the Zhentongpa and *Mahamadhyamaka* subschools further developed the conception of voidness as the absence of anything other than ultimate truth itself—which was already present, not only in canonical texts of both the Second and Third Promulgations, but also in some essential texts by Nagarjuna and other *Madhyamikas*, as well as in some texts by the Masters who commented on the canonical texts of the Third Promulgation and who gave rise to the *Yogachara* school. According to these schools, the Uma Rangtongpas were right in claiming that individual relative phenomena were empty of self-existence (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib., rangzhinggyi tongpanyi [*rang bzhing gyis stong pa nyid*]); however, they noted that it was equally important to emphasize the fact that absolute truth was void of extraneous existents (Skt. *parashunya*; Tib., zhentong [*gzhan-stong*]).
- For a more detailed explanation of this and an exposition of the views of the various sub-schools of *Madhyamaka*, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.
- ²⁵² Many people question how one might feel compassion toward others when one grasps the emptiness and therefore the unreality both of those others and of their circumstances and sufferings. This confusion arises from a wrong understanding of the meaning of “nonreferential compassion:” in general, what the noun “compassion” refers to is not the same as piety, commiseration and charity directed toward particular individuals; in turn, the adjective “nonreferential” means that here compassion is not directed toward particular individuals and does not stem from reflecting on the problems and suffering that people face, but, as remarked in the regular text, is inherently inseparable from emptiness.

In his *King Dohas*, the *mahasiddha* Sarahapada used the example of a simpleton (who might just as well have been a drunkard) who squinted and saw two moons, and then believed them to be two substantially separate and different entities. The inseparability of emptiness and compassion is like the indivisibility of the moon, but the consequences of falling into dualism are like the delusion of the simpleton or drunkard, which make us incapable of understanding the indivisibility of what the combination of these two terms refers to.

In fact, it is the illusion of inherently true selfhood or egohood that lies at the root of selfishness and that causes us to always put what we consider to be in our own interest before the interests of others. When we find ourselves possessed by the illusion of inherent existence, we are in the state described in Pascal, Blaise, posthumous edition, 1669, Spanish translation, 1977:

“(134) All hate each other, although they feign charity or serving the public welfare; (135) admirable rules of courtesy, morality and justice have been founded on concupiscence and made out of it; but the heart, this *fragmentum malum*, rather than having been uprooted, has been covered up.”

Evil is not inherent in our true nature, but in delusion and the ego grasping it involves, which is the root of selfishness and egotism (though it is the play of our true nature that gives rise to delusion, evil is always a function of the latter). The covering up of the evil impulses that issue from ego-delusion, which is achieved by the mechanics which Freud explained in terms of the concept of “repression” and which Sartre explained in terms of that of “bad faith,” rather than curbing those evil impulses, potentiates them and exacerbates them, insofar as it gives rise to what Jung called “the shadow” and what psychoanalysis calls “unconscious phantasy,” which is the true *fragmentum malum* at the root of evil—especially because then we are compelled to see the *fragmentum malum* in others and to try to destroy this *fragmentum* by trying to destroy those others.

Contrariwise, when delusion is uprooted, from our chest there may emanate a warmth that embraces all sentient beings and all things without discrimination, and the whole universe, with the totality of human and other sentient beings in it, is our own body, which we take care of naturally, beyond the idea of substantial, external individuals or beings with absolutely true sufferings whom we should pity and feel sorrow for.

²⁵³ In the first *bhumi*, called “joyful” (Skt., *pramudita*; Tib., *rab-tu dga’-ba*), the *bodhisattva* is said to become a “sublime *bodhisattva*” or “superior *bodhisattva*” (*arya bodhisattva*), and to fully realize the first *paramita*, which is that of generosity (Skt., *dana*; Tib., *sbyin pa*). In the second *bhumi*, called “stainless” (Skt., *vimala*; Tib., *dri-ma med-pa*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the second *paramita*, which is that of discipline or morality (Skt., *shila*; Tib., *tshul khrims*). In the third *bhumi*, called “illuminating” (Skt., *prabhakari*; Tib., *’od-byed*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the third *paramita*, which is that of forbearance (Skt., *kshanti*; Tib., *bzod pa*). In the fourth *bhumi*, called “flaming” (Skt., *archimasti*; Tib., *’od ’phro-ba*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the fourth *paramita*, which is that of perseverance (Skt., *virya*; Tib., *brtson ’grus*). In the fifth *bhumi*, called “the difficult to achieve” (Skt., *sudurjaya*; Tib., *sbyang dka’-ba*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the fifth *paramita*, which is that of contemplative absorption (Skt., *dhyana*; Tib., *bsam gtan*). In the sixth *bhumi*, called “realized” (Skt., *abhimukhi*; Tib., *mngon-du byed-pa*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the sixth *paramita*, which is that of discriminative wisdom (Skt., *prajña*; Tib., *shes-rab*). In the seventh *bhumi*, called “far gone” (Skt., *durangama*; Tib., *ring-du song-ba*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the seventh *paramita*, which is that of method (Skt., *upaya*; Tib., *thabs*). In the eighth *bhumi*, called “the immovable” (Skt., *achala*; Tib., *mi-gyo-ba*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the eighth *paramita*, which is that of effort (Skt., *bala*; Tib., *stobs*). In the ninth *bhumi*, called “supreme intelligence” (Skt., *sadhumati*; Tib., *legs-pa’i blo-gros*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the ninth *paramita*, which is that of aspiration (Skt., *pranidhana*; Tib., *smon lam*). Finally, in the tenth *bhumi*, called “cloud of *dharma*” (Skt., *dharmamega*; Tib., *chos-kyi sprin-pa*), the *arya bodhisattva* is said to fully realize the tenth *bhumi*, which is that of primordial gnosis or primordial wisdom (Skt., *jñana*; Tib., *ye-shes*). Then on the final *bhumi*, called “all-pervading light” (Skt., *samantaprabha*; Tib., *kun-tu-’od*), the individual is no longer considered to be a *bodhisattva*, but is now deemed to be a fully-fledged Buddha.

²⁵⁴ The *kleshavarana* or *nyöndrib* (*nyon-sgrib*), which are defined as “any state of mind that when developed brings about uneasiness and suffering,” and which according to the gradual *Mahayana* are totally removed when the *bodhisattva* moves from the sixth to the seventh level (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*), are classified into:

- (1) Intellectual or theoretical delusion (Tib., *kuntag nyönmongkyi dribpa* [*kun-btags nyon-mongs-kyi sgrib-pa*]), which is any intellectual framework that justifies, gives rise to, or reinforces delusory valuation,

grasping and the manifestation of the passions. This is what is known as a “wrong view,” of which classical examples are: believing one is an inherently existing, autonomous, independent self; thinking that relative conditioned phenomena are permanent; saying that there is no basis for propounding the Four Noble Truths; believing that a god made the universe; etc.

- (2) Inborn delusion (Tib., *lhenkye nyönmongkyi dribpa* [*lhan-skyes nyon-mongs-kyi sgrib-pa*]), which is the inborn tropism to grasp, and to delusory value and absolutize thoughts, in such a way as to automatically give rise to the various defilements (such as the three poisons, the six root delusions, etc.). Examples of this are: the automatic arousal of anger when someone insults one and the reflex drive to retaliate; the automatic welling-up of longing desire as soon as one encounters an object to which one is attracted, and the reflex drive to appropriate that object; etc.

²⁵⁵ The *jñeyavarana* or *shedrib* (*shes-sgrib*) are called the “obstacle of knowledge” insofar as they do not involve the passions themselves (which are the “obstacle of passionate delusion:” the *kleshavarana* or *nyöndrib* [*nyon-sgrib*]), but are a subtler manifestation of delusion that is limited to the non-passionate delusory valuation of knowledge and action—which as such cannot create the causes for rebirth in lower realms. (My translation of *kleshavarana* or *nyöndrib* as “obstacle of passionate delusion” is due to the fact that *nyönmong* [*nyon-mongs*] is the term that refers to the passions, but its root, which is *nyön* [*nyon*], implies madness and therefore delusion: in Tibetan, “crazy” or “mad” is *nyönpa* [*nyon-pa*] or *nyönma* [*nyon-ma*], according to the person’s gender.)

This kind of obscuration often has been defined as the delusory valuation of knowledge and action that remains after coarse delusions (*kleshavarana* or *nyöndrib* [*nyon-sgrib*]) and the intense passionate *karma* involved have been uprooted, and which underlies these so long as they are present. It is because of the emphasis on the fact that these delusions remain after coarse ones have been uprooted that in the twentieth century the coarse obscurations that constitute the obstacle of passions has been compared to a mothball in a drawer, and the subtle obscurations that constitute the obstacle of knowledge has been symbolized by the odor that remains in the drawer once the mothball has been removed. However, as we have just seen, the latter obstacle is also active while the former is present.

An instance of the obstacle of knowledge that is present both while the coarse obscurations that make up the obstacle of passions are active and after they have been removed, is that of the intentional self-conscious action that characterizes *samsara*, the drawbacks of which are the same whether or not the action is carried out under the influence of the passions. As we have seen, whenever we act in an intentional and self-conscious manner, at the moment of acting we take the entity designated by our name as the object of our consciousness and we perceive this entity as “a subject that is carrying out an action,” producing a greater or lesser degree of self-impediment. In *Ch’an* or *Zen* Buddhism, in order to develop the capacity to act in the state of Contemplation, beyond the influence of the basic human delusion and the self-interference that this implies, a series of *tao* or *do* are practiced, among which archery may provide us with a useful example. When an archer shoots under the power of delusion, at the moment of shooting his or her own consciousness takes the human entity that is shooting as its object and perceives it in terms of an intuitive thought that in discursive terms could be expressed as “now I am shooting.” Thereby the subject-consciousness that has decided to shoot *becomes* the shooter that is being perceived as object, which interferes with the consciousness’ subjectivity-spontaneity, interrupting it for a second and thereby giving rise to a light twitch that deflects the arrow. The training of the *Zen* archer aims at allowing him or her to “shoot without shooting:” while uncontrivedly “aiming” at the center of the target, his or her fingers must open spontaneously to free the arrow, beyond any self-conscious intention to shoot. When the archer finally succeeds in this “prowess” every time he shoots, nothing interferes any longer with his aim, and so he becomes a consummate archer.

A classical gradual *Mahayana* example of the obstacle of knowledge after the coarse obscurations that constitute the obstacle of passions has been removed, is that of the effort bodhisattvas in the last three levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) still have to apply in their everyday practices.

²⁵⁶ The particular kind of *jñeyavarana* or *shedrib* (*shes-sgrib*) responsible for deviating the arrow, as well as for the effort bodhisattvas in the last three levels (Skt., *bhumi*; Tib., *sa*) still have to apply in their everyday practices, is the one called *’khor gsum rnam par rtog pa gang de shes bya sgrib par ’dod*. Most special thanks are due to the accomplished translator and scholar Elio Guarisco for the extensive research he so kindly did on my behalf concerning the usage of the term *khorsum* (*’khor gsum*).

²⁵⁷ Shantideva compared what is termed emotional obscuration or obstacle of the passions (Skt., *kleshavarana*; Tib., *nyöndrib* [*nyon-sgrib*]) to the desire spectators at a magic show feel toward the illusory woman

created by the magician, and likened what is called intellectual obscuration or obstacle of knowledge (Skt., *jñeyavarana*; Tib., shedrib [*shes-sgrib*]) to the desire the magician himself feels toward that same illusory woman. Understood in this restricted sense, the second type of obscuration would be limited to superior bodhisattvas (those between the first and tenth level, *bhumi* or *sa*) in their post-Contemplation stage. However, the obscuration or obstacle of knowledge also underlies what is called emotional obscuration or obstacle of the passions while this type of obscuration is manifest, and as such it must be understood in the wider sense in which it is explained in the paragraph of the regular text to which the call for this note was appended.

²⁵⁸ When someone cannot continue in Contemplation indefinitely, at some point he or she must move to another condition that is marked by delusion and that therefore is dualistic, but in which delusion manifests with less force than in the ordinary individual. It is this second state that in Sanskrit is called *prishthalabdha* and that in Tibetan is called jethob (*rjes-thob*).

²⁵⁹ In the case of individuals of the type referred to in the above note, the period in which Contemplation manifests is referred to by the Sanskrit term *samahita* and the Tibetan term nyamzhak (*mnyam-bzhag*).

²⁶⁰ Human existence does not mean simply that one was born from human beings and that the shape of one's body is human. In Buddhist terms, for his or her existence to be called "human," an individual must count with the conditions necessary for realization to be attainable; for example, he or she must count with the necessary natural endowments and thus traditionally could not be deaf (as in ancient times a deaf person would have been unable to listen to the teachings), cannot be mentally retarded to the level of being unable to understand the teachings, and so on; moreover, in order to be human it is necessary to have access to the teachings of the *Dharma* and the effective possibility of practicing them.

²⁶¹ This noun refers to a group of essential, direct teachings of the Dzogchen Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or *Upadeshavarga*. As noted in Namkhai Norbu, Ed. E. Capriles, unpublished, this term has been translated erroneously into Western languages as "heartdrop." However, in this case the word "nying" (*snying*) does not refer to the physical heart, but to the innermost essence, to what is most central and essential. In turn, "thik" (*thig*) is the root syllable of the word "thigle" (*thig-le*), which here has the twofold sense of potentiality and absence of limitations (which is what the roundness of thigles represents), and which therefore may be said to refer to a limitless potentiality. (Roundness represents the absence of limitations because it represents the lack of concepts: the very nature of concepts is to establish limits or bounds that exclude all that does not fall within their own scope; for example, the concept of table automatically implies the exclusion of all that is not a table.) Since angles confine and restrict space, in the teachings they represent limits, and insofar as circles, spheres and so on have no angles, they represent the absence of limits and therefore are used to symbolize the true nature of entities, which cannot be contained in concepts, as well as the realization of this true nature, in which there is absolutely no delusory valuation-absolutization of concepts. This is why Buddhism represents the state of *dharmakaya* by a circle, and why the Dzogchen teachings represent our true condition with a sphere.)

In short, rather than "heartdrop," Nyingthik means "the most essential potentiality." Furthermore, in the same book Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche points out that in Tibetan the word "drop" is not *thig* but *thigs*: it has a final *sa* that is not part of the term "nyingthik" (*snying-thig*) or of the root syllable of the word "thigle."

Although in general the essential teachings of Dzogchen Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* are those known as Nyingthik, in the same work the Master Namkhai Norbu points out that:

"The most concentrated essence of the Nyingthik consists in the body of teachings grouped under the term Yangthik (*yang-thig*). In Tibetan, *yang* means "even more." For example, something profound is "zabmo" (*zab-mo*), and something even more profound is "yangzab" (*yang-zab*). "Essential" is "nyingpo" (*snying-po*), and "even more essential" is "yangnying" (*yang-snying*)...

"Thus, the Yangthik—explained in many volumes of teachings, among which perhaps the most widespread are those revealed by the tertön (*gter-ston*) Dungtso Repa (*Dung-mtsho Ras-pa*)—is deeper and more essential than other teachings. All Yangthik teachings transmit methods to develop the capacity of Contemplation, which these teachings assume the practitioner already has, insofar as it is the requisite for practicing these methods."

²⁶² Unlike the "Four Reflections," the Seven Lojongs are not restricted to the *Hinayana* level of the lamrim Path; in particular, the trainings in contemplation pertaining to the Seventh Lojong include *Vajrayana* and/or *Atiyana* elements.

²⁶³ This is the general way of referring to this tradition. In his *sutra*, Hui-neng noted that no tradition is sudden or gradual, and that these adjectives should be applied to students rather than to teachings or schools, for

no doubt some students are more “sudden” than others (Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969); however, the term is used to refer to the *Ch’an* or *Zen* School insofar as in it Awakening is not posited as the result of a gradual development through paths and levels, but as an instantaneous breakthrough.

²⁶⁴ It is easy to wonder how can the sudden *Mahayana* value a *sutra* that asserts that, after attaining *Vajra*-like *samadhi*, the *bodhisattva* will have to study the majestic conduct of the Buddhas for one thousand aeons and the refined practices of the Buddhas for ten thousand aeons before finally fulfilling Buddhahood. However, *Ch’an* views this as having a hidden meaning, and to prove their point retort: “each *kalpa* being immeasurable, how could anyone posit one thousand or ten thousand in a literal sense?” As shown by the story of the conversion of Te-shan (Cleary, Thomas and J. C., translators, 1977), the same reply is given to the general *Mahayana* statement that the *bodhisattva* attains Awakening after three periods of immeasurable *kalpas* on the Path (one of these periods is required to go through the paths of accumulation and preparation or application; one for going through levels one to seven [i.e., for the path of Vision and part of the path of Contemplation]; and one for going through the last three levels of the path of Contemplation and reaching the path of No more learning).

²⁶⁵ Although, according to *Hinayana* Buddhism, only monks can attain *nirvana*, in the *Mahayana* the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa* presents as a model of the perfect practitioner, very superior to the *Hinayana* monk, a lay *bodhisattva* who lived at home with his family and whose conduct could not be set up as a paradigm of the Path of renunciation. If *Vimalakirti* is set as the supreme type of practitioner by an important canonical text of the *Sūtrayāna*, it is curious that some Sarmapa monks, in spite of being *Vajrayāna* practitioners—and thus of applying a Path that is not centered on the level of the body to which vows belong, and that does not teach practitioners should become monks and nuns—and in spite of seeing no problem in being granted temporary dispense of their vows in order to take a secret consort when this is required in order to perform specific practices, express misgivings and even overt hostility toward lay Masters.

The above does not happen among the Nyingmapa, according to whose teachings it is not convenient for the supreme Masters, who are the tertöns (*gter-ston*) or “revealers of spiritual treasures” (the term will be explained toward the end of the main text of this Part One of the book), to be monks or nuns, insofar as necessarily they have to take a consort. Neither does it happen among the Sakyapa (for the hierarchs of this tradition have to be laymen), or among the Drugpa Kagyü, etc.

Furthermore, in many of the *sūtras* mentioned above in the regular text of this book, elements are found that seem to belong to the Path of spontaneous liberation, while in certain *sūtras* (some of which were not included among the former) we find elements that seem to belong to the Path of transformation. (These two Paths will be considered below in the regular text of this book).

Concerning the *sūtras* that feature elements that seem to belong to the Path of transformation, it is extremely significant that the *bodhisattva* Maracharya Vishnaya Vimala, hero of the *Arya-shurangama-samadhi Nama Mahayana-Sūtram* (extant in Tibetan version), puts the demonic forces of delusion to the service of Awakening—which seems to be related to the principle of inner Tantras. In his turn, as will be shown in a subsequent section of the regular text of this book, the *bodhisattva* Vimalamitra, hero of the above-mentioned *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra*, was an extremely important lineage holder in the lineal succession of both the *Mahayogatantra* and the *Anuyogatantra*.

With regard to those *sūtras* of the *Mahayana*, pertaining both to the Second and Third Promulgations, which feature elements that seem to belong to the Path of spontaneous liberation, in a subsequent section of the regular text it will be seen that, according to the Dzogchen teachings, the tönpa or Primordial Master Garab Dorje, who introduced Buddhist Dzogchen into the human world, was an emanation of Shakyamuni Buddha. Since this implies that Shakyamuni could not have been unaware of the principle of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo, it could explain the fact that those *Sūtras* contain elements that seem to be based on the principle of the *Atiyogatantrayana* or that somehow show its traces.

Moreover, regarding *Mahayana* Buddhism in general (i.e., both abrupt and gradual), it is important to bear in mind that, according to the traditions of the Ancient or Nyingmapa School of Buddhism codified in the work by Pawo Tsuglag Threngwa (*dPa’ bo gtsug lag phreng ba*) *A Feast for the Erudite* (*Chöjung Khepai Gatön* [*chos ’byung mkhas pa’i dga’ ston*]), one of the two lines of transmission originating from the first Buddhist Dzogchen Master, Garab Dorje (*dGa’-rab rDo-rje*), had Nagarjuna as one of its links, and Nagarjuna’s disciple and associate in developing the *Madhyamaka*, Aryadeva, attained the rainbow body after receiving Dzogchen teachings from Mañjushrimitra the Younger (cf. Norbu, Namkhai [Italian 1988], *Un’introduzione allo Dzog-chen. Risposte a sedici domande*. Arcidosso, Grosseto, Shang Shung Edizioni).

This has led Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu (*ibidem*) to state that the theoretical view of the original *Madhyamaka* may well be a *Mahayana* expression of the essential outlook of Dzogchen.

In their turn, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva (called Kanadeva in the Sutra) were respectively the fourteenth and fifteenth links in the lineal succession of Ch'an or Zen. This, in connection to the information contained in the *Chöjung Khepa Gatön* and the assertions made by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu, has led Western scholars to speculate that the sudden *Mahayana* may have been the result of adapting the practice of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo to the principles of the *Mahayana* (thereby introducing into it the partiality towards voidness Namkhai Nyingpo denounced in his *Kathang Dennga* [*bKa'thang sDe-lnga*]), and that the original theoretical view of *Madhyamaka* may well be the conceptual expression of the realization of the sudden *Mahayana*.

All of the above is quite congruent with the fact that, in his *Samten Migdrön* (*bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*), Nubchen Sangye Yeshe (*gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes*) designated the *Atiyogatantrayana* as the "universal ancestor of all vehicles," and that some other teachings of *Ati* Dzogpa Chenpo seem to suggest that all paths of Awakening might have been derived from the mentioned primordial vehicle (in fact, the very title "primordial" implies the meaning of "source of everything").

Though some Bönpo Masters (such as Lopön Tenzin Namdak) privately have claimed that the Buddhist *Mahayana*, *Vajrayana* and *Atiyogatantrayana* were originally taught by Bönpo Masters, and privately have insisted that Garab Dorje was in truth the Bönpo Master Rasang Taphritsa (*Ra sangs ta pi hri tsa*), there is no evidence whatsoever to substantiate such claims, which, so long as evidence is missing, should be decidedly dismissed.

²⁶⁶ Not only are Nagarjuna and Aryadeva listed among the Patriarchs of the *Dhyana*, *Ch'an* or *Zen* School. According to the traditions of the Old or *rNying-ma-pa* School of Tibetan Buddhism that were codified in Tibetan Text 8 (Ms A, p. 568, cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988, pp. 26-27), Nagarjuna and Aryadeva also were lineage holders in the transmission of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, which has been taken to imply that the *Madhyamaka* is a philosophical explanation, adapted to the gradual *Mahayana*, of the essential View of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*. In this regard, we can read in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1988:

"The (theoretical) viewpoint of Dzogchen is that of the *Madhyamaka-Prasangika* system, aim of the teaching of Buddha and supreme among Buddhist philosophical systems, originally expounded by Nagarjuna and his disciple Aryadeva.* This is confirmed by the (root *Tantra* of the Dzogchen Menngagde series), the *Drataljur* (*sGra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud*; Skt., *Shabda maha prasamga mula tantra*). Therefore, we could conclude that the (theoretical) view of Dzogchen (corresponds to that of) this philosophical system that transcends eternalism and nihilism. (In fact, it is even possible to speculate that the (theoretical) view of *Madhyamaka-Prasangika* (may) have originated from Dzogchen. There are two reasons to substantiate this. The first is that the (real) Knowledge of the true condition cannot be something different from the state of spontaneous perfection of Dzogchen, and therefore the view of *Madhyamaka-Prasangika* must correspond to it. The other is that Garab Dorje (*dGa'-rab rDo-rje*), the first Master of (Buddhist) Dzogchen, was the source of two lineages, one of seven disciples and one of twenty-one, and one of these twenty-one successors was Nagarjuna. Besides, it is claimed that Aryadeva vanished in light after having received Dzogchen teachings from the second Mañjushrimitra (who is considered to have been an emanation of the direct disciple of Garab Dorje bearing the same name). All of this is clearly reported in *A Feast for the Erudite: A History of Buddhism* (Tibetan Text 8, Ms A, p. 568).

"But even if the (theoretical) view of Dzogchen (corresponds to) that of *Madhyamaka-Prasangika*, Sakya Pandita asserted that:

"The View of Primordial *Yoga* (*Atiyoga*) is wisdom rather than a vehicle."

"Therefore, it is not correct, basing oneself merely on a limited vision, to define Dzogchen as a philosophical system transcending eternalism and nihilism, (for this would reduce Dzogchen to a theoretical) view. Dzogchen must in fact be understood in the completeness of the three aspects which are the Base, the Path and the Fruit. The (term tawa [*lta-ba*], which is translated as) View, (indicates) only one of the three elements of the Path, and thus (is far from) representing the whole (of Dzogchen)."

*Note 14 by Adriano Clemente:

"*Madhyamaka* (*dBu ma*) philosophy was originally taught by the Indian Master Nagarjuna... and his disciple Aryadeva. In a later period two schools developed, the *Prasangika* (*Thal 'gyur pa*) and the *Swatantrika* (*Rang 'gyur pa*). The first, faithful to the original thought of the founder, and propounded by Buddhapalita (470-540), does not uphold any theory, but limits itself to showing the absurdity of all possible theses

concerning the ultimate nature of reality. The second, founded by Bhavaviveka (fifth century), is based on a more systematic formulation of this philosophy.”

²⁶⁷ In the standard translation of *The Sutra of Hui-neng* (in Wong Mou-Lam and A. F. Price, translators, 1969 pp. 50-1) there is no explanation as to the identity of Kanadeva, who is listed as the 15th Patriarch and successor to Nagarjuna, the 14th Patriarch. However, in the standard translation of the *Ch'an* classic *The Blue Cliff Record* (Thomas and J. C. Cleary, translators, 1977, vol. I, Thirteenth Case, pp.88-93) the fact that Kanadeva was a disciple of Nagarjuna is emphasized, and in a note to the same book the translators note that Kanadeva is another name for Aryadeva.

²⁶⁸ Since Nagarjuna and Aryadeva are among these Masters, some Western scholars have speculated that the original *Madhyamaka* philosophy developed by these two Masters may have been an adaptation of the view of the sudden school to the gradual *Mahayana*. However, since, as stated in the preceding note, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were links in the lineage of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, which in Tibetan Text 1 (pp. 290-145b, 6) was referred to as “the universal ancestor of all vehicles,” it would be more reasonable to think that both the sudden *Mahayana* *qua* vehicle, and the view of original *Madhyamaka*, arose as ways of adapting the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* to the *Mahayana* view and practice. This, however, would have to be determined by future research and scholarship.

The sudden *Mahayana* makes use of the views and explanations of the original *Madhyamaka*, many of which correspond to the Rangtongpa view. However, the theoretical view of this school is based on the Third Promulgation, and so its writings and records make ample reference to the single, primordial Mind, as well as to the *Lankavatara Sutra*’s so-called “eight consciousnesses,” which later on became a central tenet of the *Yogachara* School (the fact should not be overlooked that the *Sutra of Hui-neng* lists Vasubandhu as the twenty-first link in the transmission of *Ch'an* or *Zen*). Thus the ideas, terminology and explanations of (1) the Second Promulgation and the *Madhyamaka* School, and (2) the Third Promulgation, coexist and fuse in the sudden *Mahayana*. However, what this vehicle took from the Third Promulgation was not digested in terms of *Yogachara* philosophy, for in the sudden *Mahayana* the general conception of the voidness of the manifold phenomena is that of the *Madhyamika* Rangtongpas, and the seemingly idealistic explanations it provides insist on the voidness of Mind in a way that is reminiscent of the views of the subtle, inner *Madhyamaka* (i.e., of the *Mahamadhyamaka* and Zhentongpa schools).

It must be noted that in the Sudden *Mahayana* we do not find lengthy theoretical explanations of reality like those provided by the different theoretical schools of the *Mahayana*, for its intent is to cut off speculation and all wanderings of mind, and achieve sudden Awakening (Chinese, *wu*; Japanese, *satori*). Therefore, it would not be totally accurate to say that, like *Mahamadhyamaka*, the sudden *Mahayana* unifies the Rangtongpa and Zhentongpa sub-schools of the *Madhyamaka*.

(For an explanation of the above schools and their relation to Dzogchen and Tantrism, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)

²⁶⁹ Although it is possible that this term may have been used in the Northern school as well, I have seen it in Huang Po, who belonged to the Southern school. Cf. Blofeld, John, translator, 1958.

²⁷⁰ In fact, the meaning of “great use of *prajña*” corresponds to that of *upaya* or *thab* (*thabs*), which, as we have seen, is the counterpart of *prajña*. *Ibidem*.

²⁷¹ On the same occasion, emperor Wu asked Bodhidharma what was the highest meaning of the holy truths. Reportedly he replied, “Empty, without holiness.” (Thomas and J. C. Cleary, translators, 1977, vol. I, First Case, pp. 1 and 3.)

²⁷² “Other directed assertions” are not made because the individual who makes them believes them to be true, but because he or she intends to produce a specific effect on the interlocutor. Therefore, they are not made “from one’s own heart,” but only in view to lead others beyond delusion. For a more detailed discussion of this, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

²⁷³ Normal people are confused and deluded, and yet feel certain that their ideas, beliefs and perceptions are absolutely sound. The above was a means of shaking the emperor’s beliefs and throwing him into a state in which confusion becomes evident and which therefore is nearer to Awakening than normal, smooth-functioning delusion—and, most important, from which it is far easier to Awaken. The point is that genuine *Ch'an* and *Zen* Masters are perfectly aware that no statement can correspond to absolute truth; they will express ideas such as the above, which seem to respond to the standpoint of emptiness or voidness, but as soon as they realize that their interlocutor is clinging to such ideas, they will affirm the opposite viewpoint in order to lead him or her beyond clinging to dualistic concepts. This is the essence of

the *Ch'an* or *Zen* method of interrelated opposites that I have explained in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

²⁷⁴ Countless other texts could be cited to make the same point, but I chose to provide as a token this brief quotation from the *Sutra of Hui-neng* because, as we have seen, this is the most important extant text of *Ch'an/Zen* Buddhism.

Furthermore, a very interesting paradox can be appreciated when comparing (1) Tibetan monasteries, in which the law of cause and effect was constantly emphasized, together with the practices of the gradual *Mahayana* for developing the *bodhichitta* of intention and the *bodhichitta* of action (and especially the practices for developing the Four Immeasurables and such practices as giving and taking, exchanging oneself for others, and so on), and (2) Chinese monasteries dedicated to the practice of *Ch'an*—a tradition accused by Tibetans of negating the law of cause and effect—in which the Four Immeasurables and such practices as giving and taking, exchanging oneself for others, and so on, were not emphasized. While most Tibetan monasteries were feudal lords that sustained themselves from the fat tributes exacted from their feudal serfs and took donations from the people at large, Chinese *Ch'an* monasteries were self-sustaining, for the monks, including the abbot and supreme Master, every day ploughed the fields all morning long, precisely in order not to be a charge to the poor peasants of the area—or to anyone else, for that matter. In particular, *Ch'an* Master Pai-chang Hui-hai instituted the norm “one day without work, one day without food,” which was adopted by all *Ch'an* monasteries. (When Pai-chang was very old and feeble, he was asked to stop working on the fields, but he refused. In order to protect his health and well-being, a monk hid his laboring utensils; however, the Master stopped eating, and so his utensils had to be returned to him, and so he was able to continue plowing the fields.) Moreover, in general *Ch'an* monks and nuns are at great pains not to let even the smallest morsel of food be lost. (When Te-shan was in the company of other monks by a river that flowed from the wilderness, the monks saw a leaf of spinach being carried by the current; saying there should be a man of the Path in the mountains, they proposed to follow the river upwards. However, Te-shan said no man of the Path would let a leaf of spinach go to waste, and refused to search for whoever let the leaf be carried away by the river.)

The above is not to say that all Tibetan practitioners depended on exacting tribute from others. Many Nyingmapa Masters were laymen who as such did not live in monasteries, but were not lay feudal lords; among them a great number herded their bovines or carried out other productive activities. As we read in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], Ed. John Shane, 1986, revised edition 1999, there were also self-sustaining communities such as the one led by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu's root *Guru*, Rigdzin Changchub Dorje, which obtained its resources from the labor of all members and, moreover, offered a daily free soup to the destitute and the poor in the surroundings, and helped many with diagnostic and free medicines. Furthermore, there were Tibetan monasteries that did not exact tribute from the peasants; according to an article in the *Vajradhatu Sun* in the early 1980s, this was the case with the monasteries under the Tai Situpas. And so on.

²⁷⁵ In the West, there has been controversy as to whether this debate actually took place. Some of the Western sources discussing the supposed debate are: Demiéville, Paul, 1952; Tucci, Giuseppe, 1958; Houston, G. W., 1980; Guenther, Herbert V., 1983; Yanagida Seizan, 1983; Gómez, Luis O., 1983a; Gómez, Luis O., 1983b; Wayman, Alex, 1979 (pp. 44-58). Brief yet most important commentaries in this regard (some of which are included in the discussion of the debate featured in the regular text of this chapter) were also made in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished.

Many scholars who have concentrated on the *Ch'an* or *Zen* of the Southern school insist that the Northern school propounds a gradual Path. This indicates that what they know about the Northern school is only what the Southern school asserts about it, and that they have not studied any of the original manuscripts of that school discovered in Tun-Huang by Paul Pelliot and others. In all of these, it is evident that the Northern school is based on the principle of “sudden” Awakening and that its teachings are not so different from those of the Southern school as the latter has presented them.

²⁷⁶ The fact that, according to Namkhai Nyingpo's *bKa'-thang sDe-lnga* and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's *bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*, provided that the practitioner has the adequate capacity, the sudden Path of the Mahayana (represented by *Ch'an* or *Zen*) is swifter and more effective than the gradual one, does not mean that the method of meditation defended by Kamalashila is wrong. Kennard Lipman (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], Ed. Kennard Lipman, 1984, p. 33, note 11) tells us that, according to Nubchen Sangye Yeshe's *bSam-gtan Mig-sgron* (Leh, Ladakh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1974, pp. 23-24):

“Kamalashila taught according to sutras that were provisional in their meaning (*drang don*) and ‘incomplete’ (*yongs su ma rdzogs*), while Hwa-shan taught according to (sutras that) were ‘complete’ (*yongs su rdzogs*). See H. V. Guenther, “‘Meditation’ Trends in Early Tibet,” in *Early Ch’an in China and Tibet*, p. 352. There is a parallel passage in the *bKa’-thang sDe-lnga*, edited and translated by G. Tucci in his *Minor Buddhist Texts* (Rome, Is.M.E.O., 1958), p. 68 ff. He mistranslates: The Indian *acharya* Kamalashila did not fully realize (the meaning) of the sutras, the sense of which is to be determined (i.e., relative, *drang don*, *neyartha*)... (p. 82, the passage in Tibetan in to be found on p. 69). The text has the same meaning as that of the *bSam-gtan Mig-sgron*.”

In fact, the Menngagde (*Man-ngag-sde*) or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen features the method taught by Kamalashila as a *semdzin* (*sems-dzin*); however, it does not claim that the ensuing experience is the absolute truth, but explicitly states it is to be a mere *nyam* (*nyams*) or illusory experience that must be used to discover the nondual awareness in which it manifests.

²⁷⁷ The Japanese name of the Rinzai tradition, which was imported into Japan by Eisai Zenji (1141-1215) is *Rinzai-shu*, which translates the Chinese *Lin-chi-tsung*, Lin-chi (d. 866; Japanese, Rinzai) being the founder of this school. Its Korean name is *Imje-chong*, and the Vietnamese one is *Lam-te*.

The Japanese name of the Soto tradition, which was imported into Japan by Dogen Zenji (1200-1253) is *Soto-shu*, which translates the Chinese *Ts’ao-tung-tsung*; this school was founded by Tung-shan Liang-chieh (806-869; Jap., Tozan Ryokai) and his disciple Ts’ao-shan Pen-chi (Jap., Sozan Honjaku), and its name combines the first characters of both names. Its Vietnamese name is *Tao-Dong*.

²⁷⁸ In this context it would not be permissible to speak of the two aspects of the Base, which according to the Dzogchen teachings are *katak* and *lhundrub*, for these concepts do not belong to the *Mahayana*, gradual or sudden—nor does *Ch’an* or *Zen* make use of the *lhundrub* principle in the sense and to the extent in which it is applied in the Dzogchen teachings. However, if illegitimately we transposed these concepts into the sudden *Mahayana*, perhaps it could be permissible to say that the approach that in present day Japan is represented by the Rinzai School makes *some kind of use* of the principle of *lhundrub*—albeit the *katak* aspect predominates in the practice of the *Mahayana* in general and the principle of *lhundrub* is neither acknowledged nor fully employed.

It may also be remarked that in the Soto school the two rows of practitioners sit back to back, facing the walls, whereas in the Rinzai school the two rows of students face each other. The first way of sitting emphasizes the *katak* aspect of voidness and calm to a greater extent than the latter, which in its turn may activate the systemic loops that lead delusion to its *reductio ad absurdum*, which are related to the *lhundrub* aspect of spontaneity and spontaneous perfection.

For a more detailed discussion of the concepts of *katak* and *lhundrub*, see Part Two of this book.

²⁷⁹ The Japanese term *dokusan* means literally “go alone to a high one” and refers to the meeting of a *Zen* student with his teacher alone in the Master’s room. Soto *Zen* abandoned this extremely important practice since the middle of Meiji times.

²⁸⁰ In fact, Tung-shan Liang-chieh himself, the original Chinese founder of the Soto School, was involved in a good deal of *mondos*. See Cleary, Thomas and J. C., translators, 1977, vol. II, case 43 (pp. 306-311) and *Biographies of Masters* (pp. 449-452).

²⁸¹ In T’ang China, after achieving certainty in Awakening (Chinese, *wu*; Japanese, *satori*), *Ch’an* practitioners used to go for long periods into a hut for continuing with their practice in strict retreat, assisted by a less experienced monk who, at the same time, would learn from the more advanced practitioner. I do not know what was the practice they would do in such retreats, but one may assume that the aim of it was to make the state of *satori* stable.

²⁸² Aversion or *zhedang* (*zhe-sdang*; Skt., *dwesha*) is one of the “three poisons:” the three most basic passions that sustain *samsara*. The other two are attachment / desire or *döchag* (*’dod-chags*; Skt., *raga*) and consistent ignoring / obfuscation or *timug* (*gti-mug*; Skt., *moha*). The term *zhedang* has also been translated as anger and hatred, but actually these are just some of the particular instances of aversion, which is what the term really refers to, and what the practice of Thögel (*thod-rgal*) must activate.

²⁸³ The two main stages of practice in the Dzogchen Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or *Upadeshavarga* are *Tekchö* (*khregs-chod*) or “spontaneous rupture of tension” and Thögel (*thod-rgal*) or “acceleration” (the meaning of this translation, which is not literal, will be briefly explained in a subsequent note, and then will be discussed in detail in Volume Two of this book). It could very well be said that Thögel is to a great extent a way of boosting the practice of *Tekchö* through the manifestation of luminosity, which activates the tendency to irritation at the root of the dynamic of aversion (*dwesha* or *zhedang* [*zhe-sdang*]), causing

practitioners to react to the phenomena of luminosity in manners that exacerbate their tensions—which in its turn catalyzes the process of spontaneous liberation characteristic of Tekchö or “spontaneous, instant, absolute release of tension.” This is the reason why the practice of Thögel should not be undertaken until the necessary capacity of spontaneous liberation has been developed through the practice of Tekchö. And yet it is most important to undertake it when the conditions are given, for otherwise the realization of Tekchö might not be optimized and the higher attainments of Dzogchen certainly will not be obtained.

In fact, Thögel will not only accelerate the development of the practice of Tekchö, but will give rise to realizations that can only be attained through the practice of Thögel. If the “mass of light” has not manifested in the external dimension or jing (*dbyings*), the awareness associated with our organism (and thus this very organism) will not have the possibility of integrating with it—which would mean that we could obtain other Dzogchen realizations and modes of death, but not the body of light or the total transference. (It must be stressed that, in the dynamic activated by the practice of Thögel, the “total pleasure” associated with the zhiwa [*zhi-ba*] or “peaceful” aspect—which in this case is joyful insofar as it is associated with total pleasure—of the zhitro [*zhi-khro*] is as important regarding the ensuing learning as the dynamic of the trowo [*khro-bo*] or “wrathful” aspect. In particular, in the practice of darkness, the function of the experiences of total pleasure is not any less important than that of those involving the manifestation, spontaneous exacerbation and subsequent spontaneous liberation of tensions.)

²⁸⁴ Different examples of this are found in the *Essays on Zen Buddhism* by D. T. Suzuki, which deal exclusively with the Southern school, as well as in the texts of the Northern school discovered in Tun Huang, among other texts. Nevertheless, condemnation of sensory pleasure and/or recommendations about the use of antidotes are always found next to such exhortations, which make it perfectly clear that *Ch’an* or *Zen* belongs to the Path of renunciation. (An example of *Zen* text in which different approaches co-exist is *The Vast Chinese Instructions on the Dhyana* [*bSam gtan rgya lung chen po*], which Nubchen Sangye Yeshe attributed to [Hwa-shan] *Mahayana*, but which in China and Japan are presently attributed to Bodhidharma.)

²⁸⁵ Many Sarmapa scholars have classified the Tantras as belonging to the *Abhidharmapitaka*. However, the three pitakas that make up the *Tripitaka* (*Abhidharmapitaka*, *Vinayapitaka* and *Sutrapitaka*) traditionally include the canonical texts of the *Sutrayana*, and thus I do not see any valid reason for including the Tantras in any of these.

More reasonable is the view according to which the Tantras constitute a fourth *pitaka*, called the *Tantrapitaka*. However, I would prefer to keep the term *pitaka* to refer to the canonical texts of the *Sutrayana*, which are the ones that feature the term, and classify the Tantras—which do not feature the word *pitaka*—as constituting an altogether different category.

In fact, even though saying this is a truism and a tautology, the Tantras are simply the Tantras.

²⁸⁶ In common language the Sanskrit noun *vajra* meant “diamond.” In the Buddhist teachings, the term refers to that which embodies the superlative manifestation of the qualities of diamonds: our own true nature—which, insofar as it is unconditioned and unmade, is unborn and indestructible, as well as changeless or immutable—and the nonconceptual, direct realization of it.

A diamond cut into a brilliant is transparent and spotlessly pure, and thus it may represent emptiness; however, when exposed to sunlight it gives rise to a wonderful, complex manifestation of colors, which may represent the perfect manifestation of the variegated phenomena and their consummate functionality. In fact, emptiness is merely the katak (*ka-dag*) or “primordial purity” aspect of our “*Vajra*-nature” (i.e., our true nature, which, as we have seen, possesses the qualities of the Buddhist *Vajra*), which also possesses the lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) or “spontaneous perfection” aspect that corresponds to perfect manifestation and its consummate functionality. (These two aspects of katak and lhundrub will be considered in Part Two of this book.)

Since beginningless time the three kayas or dimensions of Buddhahood have been inherent to our *Vajra* nature, which means that, besides possessing *qua* Base the *dharmakaya* (which, viewed as the ngowo [*ngo-bo*] or “essence” aspect of the Base, corresponds to emptiness), it also possesses *qua* Base the *rupakaya*, consisting in the unity of the *sambhogakaya qua* Base (**which, considered as the rangzhin [*rang-bzhin*] or “nature” aspect of the Base, corresponds to reflectiveness**) and the *nirmanakaya qua* Base (**which, considered as the thukje [*thugs-rje*] or “energy” aspect of the Base, corresponds to uninterrupted manifestation of phenomena and the latter’s functionality**). (The three aspects of the Base, consisting of ngowo or essence, rangzhin or nature, and thukje or energy, will be considered in Part Two of this book.)

²⁸⁷ In a previous note we saw that the principle of the Path of transformation is compared with the use, in the alchemical process, of a type of mercury called *makshika*: its application would be extremely risky for those who lack the necessary qualities. This warning and example are applied specifically to the practice of the Path of method or *tab-lam* (*thabs lam*) of the inner Tantras, which is the one that paradigmatically embodies the principle of the Path of transformation as explained in these pages. With respect to the application of *makshika* mercury in the alchemical process as an example of the Path of method, in particular in the *Mahayoga*, cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I., p. 277; explanation of the word *makshika* in footnote 267, vol. II, p. 19.

²⁸⁸ The *dharmadhatu* is the space of the all-embracing, empty condition of the primordial state; this is why the wisdom of the *dharmadhatu* has been called “panoramic wisdom” and “all-encompassing wisdom,” among other terms. It may also be remarked that the passion corresponding to this Buddha family, which I call “obfuscation,” contains an element of laziness—although perhaps it may be said that it consists largely in lack of motivation and interest.

²⁸⁹ This system is common to some of the Anuttarayogatantras of the New or Sarmapa schools and Mahayogatantras of the Old or Nyingmapa School, but it is not universal: other Tantric systems (and in particular certain terma [*gter-ma*] teachings) establish different correspondences between passions and primordial wisdoms [Skt., *jñāna*; Tib., *yeshe* (*ye-shes*)].

²⁹⁰ In this context, the term *bodhichitta* has the meaning given it in the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa, as well as in the Semde (*sems-sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings, rather than the one discussed in the consideration of the *Mahayana*: here it refers to the Base and true condition of all reality. In his turn, Samantabhadra is the primordial Buddha, which is our own nondual Awake awareness or *rigpa* (*rig-pa*), the self-reGnizing nature of which, according to the Dzogchen teachings, in the condition of the base-of-all and in *samsara* is veiled by a contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction (*mongcha* [*rmongs-cha*]), but not in *nirvana*, where its “own face” (so to say) becomes patent.

In turn, the name Samantabhadra, which here refers to the Base *qua* Awake condition, means “all good,” which has the connotation of “all is viable:” both in the Tantric Path of transformation and in the *Ati* Path of spontaneous liberation what manifests in *samsara* is not considered useless, or judged to be impossible to incorporate into the Path and hence repressed; contrariwise, what manifests in *samsara* is viewed as viable in that it can be turned into the Path.

²⁹¹ Our perception of entities as being substantial and self-existing is the core of the basic delusion called *avidya* or *marigpa*, which is the defilement at the root of all defilements. The schools that make up the *Madhyamaka* Rangtongpa (*Prasangika* and *Swatantrika*) understand the term “emptiness” in the sense of absence of self-existence (Skt., *swabhava shunyata*; Tib. *rangzhinggyi tongpanyi* [*rang bzhing gyis stong pa nyid*]) and lack of substantiality. However, in this context the term refers mainly to our own awareness, which is empty of a sentient being, and which can manifest experiences precisely insofar as it is empty in the sense in which a mirror may be said to be empty: in that it can fill itself with any new content without previously having to empty itself of the contents filling it.

The first of the above senses in which our own awareness was said to be empty—its being empty of a sentient being—refers to the fact that it is not a separate core of perception and action: it is not a sentient being, but an empty cognition lacking an owner—and yet delusion causes us to wrongly take it to be a sentient being and delusively experience it as a separate source of action and a separate receiver of experiences.

In order to understand the second sense in which our awareness is said to be empty, it is convenient to note that a pot, a jug, a jar, a glass and any other hollow container are said to be empty when they do not contain anything liquid or solid, and therefore we can fill them with anything liquid or solid we may wish to put in them. Now suppose that, in a *loosely* similar sense, we say that a mirror is *inherently* empty: the statement will make sense if what we are trying to say is that the mirror does not exhibit any fixed image, nor is filled with image-obstructing matter, and therefore it can “fill itself” with the reflection of whatever is put in front of it. However, when a pot, a jug, a jar, a glass or any other hollow container is filled with walnuts, for it to be filled with almonds it will have to be emptied of the walnuts that had been filling it so far. This is not the case with a mirror, which does not need to be emptied of whatever had been filling it in order to “fill itself” with the image of the new object that is placed in front of it: as the mirror “fills itself” with the new image, the old one *automatically* disappears. The fact that mirrors do not need to be emptied of the reflections they contain for them to fill themselves with new reflections may be taken to mean that, even while filled with images, mirrors are empty (for they are still ready to fill themselves with new

images), and so are the images that fill them (among other senses of the term, they may be said to be empty in the sense in which space is said to be empty: in that they are nonobstructing). Therefore, in a particular sense, it may be said that, unlike the emptiness of a pot, a jug, a jar, a glass or any other hollow container, the emptiness of a mirror is somehow inherent to it, and whatever fills a mirror is as inherently empty as the mirror itself. It is well known that one of the eight similes of illusion taught by Shakyamuni was a reflected image, which illustrated the fact that phenomena “appear yet do not have a self-nature:” the very nature of reflections illustrates the fact that phenomena are utterly empty in the rangtong sense of the word. All that was said here with regard to the mirror and its reflections applies equally to our own awareness and the phenomena it manifests—the only difference being that the phenomena manifested by our awareness are *not* the copies of entities existing externally to it. This shows that the simile of the mirror is imperfect in that it is dualistic, and therefore cannot illustrate precisely the nondual reality it represents.

At any rate, the emptiness aspect of awareness and of all reality is referred to as primordial purity insofar as “emptiness” means that both our awareness and the entities it manifests lack the substantiality and self-existence we project on them. Since the projection of self-existence and substance is the most basic defilement, the absence of these qualities means that the true condition of both the universe and ourselves is utterly free from defilement. It is because purity may be defined as lack of defilement that in the Dzogchen teachings voidness corresponds to primordial purity or *katak* (*ka-dag*).

²⁹² Note that the foremost of the three most important teachers of Atisha Dipankara Shri-Jñāna also lived in Indonesia, and that the Tibetan School founded by Atisha’s disciples—that of the Kadampas (*bka’-gdams-pa*)—was, among the ones established in the “land of the snows,” the one that did not emphasize on the practice of inner *Tantra*.

²⁹³ The Masters who introduced this school into China were Shubhakharaśimha (Shan-wu-wei: 637-735 AD), Vajrabodhi (Chin-kang-chih: 663-723) and Amoghavajra (Pu-k’ung: 705-774). The first translated the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* into Chinese, and the last introduced the mantras and the corresponding dharanis, in addition to having been the teacher of the three emperors who sponsored this school.

²⁹⁴ As we have seen, originally this was not a school, for it did not have a hierarchy and there were no other forms of Buddhism or schools in the country, in contrast with which it should have defined itself as a school. However, it began to be considered as a school once other Buddhist traditions settled in Tibet.

²⁹⁵ A more precise explanation of these was given in a note appended to the discussion of the term in the section on the *Shravakayāna*.

²⁹⁶ These include onions, leeks and other vegetables of the lily (*Liliaceae*) family, as well as some types of pepper and more pungent vegetables of the capsicum family, and so on.

²⁹⁷ In Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, notes 139 and 140, we read that the three white substances (*dkar gsum*) are yoghurt, milk and butter, and that the three sweet substances (*mngar gsum*) are sugar, molasses and honey.

²⁹⁸ According to Adriano Clemente, Supreme *Mandala* is the complete creation of the *mandala* with the central deity, and Supreme Action is the visualization of the activities performed by the Yidam such as purifying the impure dimensions etc. He writes (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, note 153, p. 168): In Tibetan, *las rgyal mchog* and *dkyil ’khor rgyal mchog*. Usually these terms denote two of the three phases that correspond to the *bskyed rim* stage: the initial contemplation of preparation (*dang po sbyor ba’i ting nge ’dzin*), which includes the transformation of oneself as the deity through the five factors of realization; contemplation of the supreme *mandala* (*dkyil ’khor rgyal mchog gi ting nge ’dzin*), which refers to the complete creation of the *mandala* with the summoning of the wisdom deity in front of oneself; contemplation of the supreme action (*las rgyal mchog gi ting nge ’dzin*), which refers to the visualization of the activities performed by the *yi dam* deity, e.g. purifying the impure dimensions etc.

²⁹⁹ Adriano Clemente writes (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, note 149, p. 167):

“The *Man ngag lta ba’i phreng ba* subdivides the *Yoga* vehicle in two series: the Tantras of the outer *yoga* of control (*rnal ’byor phyi pa thub pa’i rgyud*) and the Tantras of the inner *yoga* of method (*rnal ’byor nang pa thabs kyi rgyud*). The former, corresponding to the *Yoga Tantra*, are for those who have not got the capacity to apply the principle of absolute equality characteristic of the inner Tantras and who consequently must comply with rules that limit behavior.”

³⁰⁰ (Reproduction of previous note:) According to Adriano Clemente, Supreme *Mandala* is the complete creation of the *mandala* with the central deity, and Supreme Action is the visualization of the activities

performed by the Yidam such as purifying the impure dimensions etc. He writes (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, note 153, p. 168):

“In Tibetan *las rgyal mchog* and *dkyil 'khor rgyal mchog*. Usually these terms denote two of the three phases that correspond to the *bskyed rim* stage: the initial contemplation of preparation (*dang po sbyor ba'i ting nge 'dzin*), which includes the transformation of oneself as the deity through the five factors of realization; contemplation of the supreme *mandala* (*dkyil 'khor rgyal mchog gi ting nge 'dzin*), which refers to the complete creation of the *mandala* with the summoning of the wisdom deity in front of oneself; contemplation of the supreme action (*las rgyal mchog gi ting nge 'dzin*), which refers to the visualization of the activities performed by the yi dam deity, e.g. purifying the impure dimensions etc.”

³⁰¹ Note 157 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 169], by Adriano Clemente:

“The five factors of realization (*mngon byang lnga*), the five fundamental phases that correspond to the creation stage or *bskyed rim*, are sometimes listed slightly differently.”

³⁰² As will be shown below, the plural in the term “higher Tantras” does *not* indicate that this level of *Tantra* comprises a plurality of vehicles. I used the plural because there are many *texts* called Tantras that belong to the *single* vehicle of higher *Tantra* of the Sarmapas, which is the one called *Anuttarayogatantra* (“Unsurpassable Tantra of the Direct Realization of our Original, Unmodified Condition”).

³⁰³ While the Nyingmapa generally designate this Path as *dröllum* (*grol-lam*), the Sarmapa use the word *tharlam* (*thar-lam*). However, the words “*drölwa*” (*grol-ba*) and “*tharpa*” (*thar-pa*) may be regarded as synonyms, being interchangeable in most contexts, and are both translated as “liberation.”

³⁰⁴ The Path of method or of skillful means is known in Tibetan as *tab-lam* (*thabs-lam*)—a name that is equally used in the Tantras of the Old or Nyingmapa School and in those of the New or Sarmapa schools. In *Mahayoga*, in particular, there is a division into two yogas, which are (1) the *yoga* with characteristics or *tšenje* (*mtshan-bchas*), in which the two stages—that of generation or creation and that of perfection or completion—are practiced, and (2) the *yoga* without characteristics or *tšenje* (*mtshan-med*), in which one simply “contemplates thatness (*tathata*) or absolute nature,” so that no visualization is to be practiced.

It may be noted that the fact that there are two Paths, one of method that puts the emphasis on skillful means, *upaya* or *thab* (*thabs*), and another of liberation, which puts the emphasis on wisdom, *prajña* or *sherab* (*shes-rab*), should not lead us to think that in one of them the cause of liberation is method and that in the other the cause is wisdom. Even though from the standpoint of *Atiyoga*, *Mahayoga* is struggle-biased and cause-biased, if someone achieves Awakening in connection with the practice of *Mahayoga*, we can be sure that this did not occur as the effect of a cause, for Awakening is in all cases beyond the cause-effect relation. Furthermore, if methods are not applied, by no means will primordial gnosis spontaneously become evident on the Path of liberation, and without primordial gnosis spontaneously becoming evident in the Path of method, the latter will not bear fruit.

Finally, in Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, thought liberates itself spontaneously (i.e., liberates of its own accord), but does not do so unless method comes into play. It must be noted that in this vehicle, rather than emphasis being put on *prajña* wisdom, it is put on primordial gnosis ([*adīlñāna* or *yeshe* [*ye-shes*]]), to which, as will be shown in the corresponding chapter, the principle of spontaneous liberation is inherent: this is why *Atiyoga* calls this gnosis “all-liberating single gnosis” or *chikshe kundröl* (*gcik-shes kun-grol*). (It must be noted that, like the *Atiyoga*, the *Anuyogatantrayana* uses mainly the term “primordial gnosis” [*jñāna* or *ye-shes*] and only secondarily employs the expression “discriminating wisdom” [*prajña* or *shes-rab*]; nonetheless, its principle is not spontaneous liberation [which is exclusive to the *Atiyoga*], but transformation, which, as will be shown in the corresponding section, in this vehicle is instantaneous rather than gradual.)

³⁰⁵ In the generation or creation stage, one meditates on the union of one’s three doors (body, voice and mind) with the three vajras of the deities (*nirmanakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *dharmakaya*), placing the emphasis mainly on the generation of the visualization of the *mandala* by means of the three *samadhis* or *tingdzin* sum (*ting-'dzin gsum*), which are: (1) the *samadhi* of the great emptiness or thatness (*tathata*, which is generally rendered as “suchness”); (2) the *samadhi* of illusory or all-embracing compassion, and (3) the *samadhi* of the cause constituted by clear and stable syllables.

³⁰⁶ According to practitioners of this system, in the perfection or completion stage one gains access to the primordial gnosis or primordial wisdom of absolute bliss by means of two alternative trainings, which are: (a) the one which works with the “upper doors” (in which total bliss is obtained by means of *yantra yoga*-related practices that generate heat in the navel *chakra*, which ascends through the “central channel” and “melts” the *amrita* or ambrosia that is visualized at the crown of the head, so that the molten *amrita* may descend successively through the *chakras* and channels, giving rise to progressive degrees of pleasure), and

(b) the one that makes use of the “lower entrances” (in which heat and the ensuing total bliss arise spontaneously as a result of erotic-mystic union with the Tantric consort).

³⁰⁷ Note 162 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 172], by Adriano Clemente:

“The Illusory Body (*sgyu lus*) is also one of the Six Yogas of Naropa.”

³⁰⁸ Note 163 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 172], by Adriano Clemente:

“‘Direct action’ (*mngon spyod*) denotes the fierce actions tied to the *Karma* family whose aim is to destroy evil beings by freeing their consciousness.”

³⁰⁹ Note 164 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 173], by Adriano Clemente:

“The Clear Light (*’od gsal*) is also one of the Six Yogas of Naropa.”

³¹⁰ Note 165 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 173], by Adriano Clemente:

“The Path of Method (*thabs lam*) embraces practices tied to control of the subtle energies (*prana*) and the seed-essence (*thig le*), such as the *gtum mo* or inner heat, the purpose of which is to ‘melt’ the *thig le* to enable its reabsorption in the various *chakras*.”

³¹¹ Note 166 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 173], by Adriano Clemente:

“The activity of ‘conquest’ (*dbang*) pertains to the Padma family.”

³¹² Note 167 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 173], by Adriano Clemente:

“Concerning the term *bodhichitta*, in the inner Tantras and in particular in *rDzogs chen* it denotes the primordial state of the individual, pure from the beginning and perfectly endowed with all qualities, thus corresponding to [the] absolute *bodhichitta* of the *Mahayana Sutra* tradition. The term *rig pa* alongside *bodhichitta* indicates that Knowledge (of) the primordial state is a continuous living Presence.”

³¹³ As we have seen, there are different types of *bindu* or seed-essence. Here I am referring to the seminal *bindu*, which in the male is directly related to the semen and in the female it is mainly related to the ovum, and which is partly lost upon ejaculation and menstruation. Evidently I am not referring to the most essential aspect of *bindu* or seed-essence, which is only lost at death, for there is no way to retain the latter forever and thus achieve eternal life.

It is the thigle (*thig-le*) energy that, in a polarized form, “circulates through” the “structural pathways” called *tsa* (*rtsa*) as the different types of lung (*rlung*). (Actually this is only a way of speaking, for the “structural pathways” are not material structures, but the possible configurations of the circulation of thigle as lung). Since the energy and energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness called *kundalini* or thigle are directly related to retention of the thigles or bindus consisting in the ovum and the sperm, one pole of that energy is symbolically represented by the color of sperm and the other pole is represented by that of menstrual blood: this is the main reason why some Westerners have mistranslated the Tantric texts, saying that “the energetic winds carry red and white drops along the structural pathways called *tsa* (*rtsa*),” and that the ovum and the sperm are the gross referent of these “drops:” the thigle that circulates does not consist in drops, but in the colorless, polarized energy that rises and ebbs as *kundalini*. (It may be relevant to note that some particular experiences associated with the colors red and white are directly related to the subtle energetic winds, which is part of the reason for the use of the symbolism at the root of these mistranslations.)

The above translation of the term thigle as “drop” is due to the fact that it also refers to the sperm and ovum/blood that drops upon ejaculation and menstruation. In the context of the Dzogchen teachings the best translation of these terms is “sphere,” for ultimately they refer to the true nature of reality and the direct realization of it, which are absolutely nonconceptual; since the true nature of reality is energy and its realization implies total energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness, and since concepts are limits, which are represented by corners, this true nature of reality and its realization are represented as a total sphere (thigle chenpo [*thig-le chen-po*]). Furthermore, as we have seen, the terms thigle and *bindu* also designate the luminous spheres that can manifest when one closes one’s eyes in the dark, when one looks at the sky or, in a much more vivid, total and impressive manner, in practices like Thögel—in which they are the very condition for the swiftest methods to do their function.

³¹⁴ See note 167 to Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001 [p. 173], by Adriano Clemente, reproduced above in a previous note.

³¹⁵ *gTer-ma*. These two forms of transmission—kama and terma—will be explained later on.

³¹⁶ In Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, the visualization of the three divine manifestations and the procedure for the Contemplation of the cause are described. This description will not be reproduced here insofar as this is a public circulation book, which as such may not provide instructions for the practice.

³¹⁷ In Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, pp. 278-279 we read:

“Concerning the paths that are the object of this meditation, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* explains:

“Through their maturation during the sequence of rebirth,
the aspects of the entrance are established to be five:
because all that is substantial is intrinsic awareness,
death is [the moment of] the ultimate truth,
the intermediate state before birth is relative appearance
and the three phases of birth are the nondual truth.’

“In this way, *Mahayoga* perfectly reveals the Paths through which the rebirth process including death, the intermediate state and the three phases of birth, is immediately purified. Now, the Path that corresponds to inner radiance at the moment of death is great emptiness, and the Paths that correspond to the three phases of birth are the single symbol (*phyag-rgya gcig-pa*), the elaborate symbol (*phyag-rgya spros-bcas*) and the attainment of the *mandala* clusters (*tshom-bu tshogs-sgrub*), making five in all.”

In the work quoted above, there follows an explanation of the generation stage in terms of death, intermediate state and birth, and an extremely important explanation of the completion stage. The reader is referred to this book for an extremely wonderful description of *Mahayoga*, which to my knowledge is the most complete in any Western language so far.

³¹⁸ The following explanation of the four branches of approach and attainment or “four nyendrub” (*bsnyen-sgrub bzhi*) appears in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 208-213:

Regarding the true meaning of the four branches of approach and attainment [of Mahayoga, considered from the standpoint of Dzogchen], Tibetan text 6 (A: p. 170, 6; B: p. 24, 2) reads:

“Thus one should engage diligently in the *yoga* that leads to spontaneous perfection of the final goal of approach, complete approach, attainment and great attainment.” (Note by Adriano Clemente: In this case, according to Rong zom pa’s commentary [Tibetan text 4] the approach [*bsnyen pa*] is the object to recognize, the complete approach [*nyen ba’i bsnyen pa*] and the attainment [*sgrub pa*] are the method, and the great attainment [*sgrub pa chen po*] is the result.)

In particular, regarding the true meaning of approach, Tibetan text 6 (A: p. 171, 1; B: p. 24, 2) reads:

“Approach is the recognition of *bodhichitta*, the understanding that all phenomena have been from the beginning of the nature of Awakening, for which reason there is nothing to obtain through practice or to correct by means of antidotes.”

Regarding the true meaning of complete approach, Tibetan text 6 (A: p. 171, 2; B: p. 24, 3) reads:

“Complete approach is the recognition of oneself as the deity: the understanding that, since all phenomena have been from the beginning of the nature of Awakening, we too have been from the beginning of the nature of the deity, which is not something to realize now by means of practice.”

Regarding the true meaning of attainment, Tibetan text 6 (A: p. 171, 3; B: p. 24, 3) reads:

“Attainment is the creation of the mother: the understanding that from the dimension of space, which is the great mother, space itself manifests in the four great mothers [of the elements] earth, water, fire and air, and that from the beginning these are the mothers endowed with the active function [of existence].”

And regarding the true meaning of great attainment, Tibetan text 6 (A: p. 171, 5; B: p. 24, 5) reads:

“Great attainment is the union of method and *prajña*. From the *prajña* of the five mothers and from the emptiness of space that is the mother [there manifest] as consorts the Buddhas of the five aggregates [that represent] method, from the beginning in union without any intention. From their union [comes] *bodhichitta*, the nature of which [has the capacity to] emanate the deities, male and female (literally: brothers and sisters), whose [true] meaning is primordial Awakening. In the illusory enjoyment of a dimension that [itself] is [also] illusory, one [experiences] the illusory flow of supreme bliss: in the very moment of bliss without conceptualization, one realizes the true meaning of the absence of characteristics equal to space, thus acceding to the state of spontaneous perfection. In this way the four demons too are vanquished and the final goal is achieved.” (Note by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu: The four demons [*bdud bzhi*] that cause interruptions or hindrances to liberation are: the demon of the son of the deity or [demon] of pride [Skt., *devaputramara*; Tib., *lha’i bu’i bdud*]; the demon of the aggregates of the body [Skt., *skandhamara*; Tib., *phung po’i bdud*]; the demon of the lord of death [Skt., *mrityumara*; Tib., *’chi bdag gi bdud*]; the demon of passions or disturbing emotions [Skt., *kleshamara*; Tib., *nyon mongs pa’i bdud*].) (Note by EC: In the context of the practice of Chö [*gcod*] other four demons are listed, which should not be confused with these ones.)

Rongzompa’s commentary (Tibetan text 4, p. 259, 6) explains:

“Here [Padmasambhava’s *Garland of Views*] explains concisely how the four approaches and attainments of *Mahayoga* are transcended in Dzogpa Chenpo [for example by affirming that the approach is the recognition of *bodhichitta* and not something that depends on the temporary factor of the Path]. Great attainment is the union of method and *prajña* and refers to their union also in relation to *bodhichitta* [qua Base]: thus it demonstrates the original union and the state of spontaneous perfection of the three aspects consisting in method, *prajña* and *bodhichitta*; father, mother and male and female emanations; and the three doors of liberation, which are emptiness, the absence of intention and the absence of characteristics.” (Note by Adriano Clemente: The three doors of liberation [*rnam thar sgo gsum*], in Tibetan *stong pa nyid*, *smon pa med pa* and *mtshan ma med pa*, also called ‘the contemplations of the three doors of liberation’ [*rnam thar sgo gsum gyi ting ’dzin*] are characteristic features of the *sutra* teachings.)

Furthermore, the commentary by Ju Mipham called *Treasury of Jewels* (*Nor bu’i bang mdzod*: Tibetan text 21) states (p. 451, 3):

“Approach means recognizing *bodhichitta* as the Base in which original purity and spontaneous perfection are indivisible; that is, understanding that all phenomena, already pure in themselves, are from the very beginning of the nature of Awakening and that there is nothing new that must be obtained by means of the Path or corrected by means of antidotes.

“Complete approach means recognizing, on the basis of this same view, that the individual composed of five aggregates is the deity itself; that is, understanding that, since all phenomena are from the beginning of the nature of Awakening, we too are from the beginning of the nature of the deity, which therefore is not something to realize by generating oneself as the deity on the basis of the view of *Mahayoga* and other [vehicles]. [When it is said that] attainment is the creation of the mother, this is not the same as the creation of the mother as applied in *Mahayoga* and other [vehicles]. Rather, it means understanding that, from the dimension of space that is the great mother, space itself manifests as the four great mothers [consisting in] earth, water, fire and air, and that these mothers, endowed with the active functions of giving space, of supporting, of concentrating [in one place], of ripening and of moving, respectively, have existed from the very beginning.

“Great attainment is the union of method and *prajña*. But in which way are they united? From the *prajña* of the absence of self-nature of the five great elements that are the mothers and from the [door of] liberation of emptiness, which is the space of the mother, the Buddhas of the five aggregates, which represent method, manifest without interruption as consorts. They are in union from the beginning [on the basis of the principle of the door] of liberation and of the absence of intention, which is absolutely not the result of [engaging on] a Path. From their nature of inseparability in [the state of] *bodhichitta* all the sense bases manifest as male and female Bodhisattvas whose nature, which is the very condition of original Awakening, does not depend on the emanation of male and female bodhisattvas from the *bodhichitta* of the union of male and female deities as occurs in *Mahayoga* and other [vehicles]. The wisdom of *rigpa* illusorily enjoys the ultimate dimension of phenomena, similar to a magical display, which is the consort. When experiencing the harmonious (in Tibetan *rol mo lta bu*, literally ‘similar to music’) state of the gnosis of pleasure that manifests everywhere, without interruption and indivisible, beyond concepts and all attachments, not even a speck of dualistic attachment remains, and so the pleasure of wisdom is supreme bliss. Experiencing and enjoying its illusory flow [one understands] that this itself is the flow of the true condition that, like space, cannot be grasped even in a moment. The moment of bliss transcends all conceptual elaboration, [is based on the door of] liberation of the absence of characteristics, cannot be conceptualized within any limits, and is like space. Never leaving this dimension of total equanimity means to have realized the single state of self-arising wisdom of the ultimate nature: thus, without acting and without effort one is in the state of spontaneous perfection. In fact, the impure causes of the dualism of subject and object, being purified in self-arising wisdom, manifest without interruption as the flow of the fundamental nature: this is the accumulation of merit. The fact that there is not the slightest concept or attachment to conceptual characteristics represents the accumulation of wisdom. This total self-arising wisdom in which the two accumulations are spontaneously perfect also vanquishes the four demons and enables realization of the final goal.”

Regarding the way the four demons are vanquished, in his commentary Rongzompa (Tibetan text 4, p. 260, 3) says:

“In general every teaching has a specific method for subjugating the demons. Here it is asserted that through the four branches of approach and attainment one can vanquish the four demons. In fact, by means of contemplation of the unborn (in Tibetan *ma skyes pa’i ting nge ’dzin*)—the characteristic of recognizing

bodhichitta that is the approach—the demon of the lord of death is vanquished. By means of contemplation similar to a magical illusion (in Tibetan *sgyu ma lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin*, at times synonymous with *kun tu snang ba'i ting nge 'dzin*: the contemplation of total vision according to *Mahayoga*)—the characteristic of recognizing oneself as the deity—the demon of aggregates is vanquished. By means of contemplation that transcends the subtlest atom (in Tibetan *rdul dang bral ba'i ting nge 'dzin*: beyond any concept of an infinitesimal particle as the essential constituent of phenomena)—characteristic of the creation of the mother that is attainment—the demon of the passions is vanquished. By means of non-conceptual space-like contemplation (in Tibetan *mi dmigs mkha' dang snyoms pa'i ting nge 'dzin*)—characteristic of the union of method and *prajña* that is the great attainment—the demon of the son of the deity [that symbolizes] interruptions and distractions is vanquished. A Path that has the power to vanquish the four demons is a perfect Path, and in particular this is the great Path [that enables realization] of spontaneous perfection without relying on effort.”

All of these passages clearly explain the way to enter Total Perfection [and Completeness in terms of the categories proper to *Mahayoga*].

³¹⁹ In the *Anuyogatantra*, the Path of method has the same name as in the Nyingmapa *Mahayogatantra* and the Sarmapa *Anuttarayogatantra*, and, consequently, its name is universal: *thablam* (*thabs-lam*). In turn, the path of liberation has the same name as in the Nyingmapa *Mahayogatantra*, which, as we saw, is *dröllum* (*grol-lam*).

It is important to remark that on the *Anuyoga* Path of method or *thablam* there are—as in that of the *Mahayogatantra*—two possible trainings, which are that of the “upper doors,” in which one works with the four or six chakras in order to *cause* innate gnosis (or innate wisdom) to gradually manifest, and the training with the lower doors, consisting in union with the Tantric consort, which according to followers of this system *causes* innate wisdom to manifest instantaneously. In the second, there are two aspects, which are Contemplation of the meaning (*don*), which consists in Contemplation of thatness beyond any interpretative thought, and Contemplation of the signs or characteristics, which is the one consisting in the instantaneous transformation into the meditation deity (*devata* or *yidam*).

To conclude, in *Anuyoga* the totality of phenomenal appearances are Samantabhadra, the masculine aspect of the primordial state, which is the spontaneous *mandala* of deities, while the empty nature of all phenomenal existence is Samantabhadri, the feminine aspect of the primordial state, which is the *mandala* of primordial thatness. (Alternatively, it is said that Samantabhadra is self-arisen Awake Awareness [*rang-rig*], corresponding to the *dharmakaya*, and Samantabhadri is the *dharmadhatu*: the primordial expanse or primordial space that in realization is inseparable from the *dharmakaya*; however, there is no contradiction, for all phenomena are manifestations of awareness.) The essence of both is the child of total pleasure, the nature of the sameness that is the *mandala* of Awake Awareness.

³²⁰ Herukas are the deities that are generally called “wrathful,” but that in fact exhibit as adornments *all* the passions that in the transformed state manifest as wisdom or primordial gnosis.

³²¹ Note 192 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001[p. 187], by Adriano Clemente:

“In Tibetan *rig pa skad cig ma*: the pure nonconceptual, nondual instantaneous Presence that is the specific feature of the path of *rDzogs chen Atiyoga*.”

³²² Note 193 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001[p. 187], by Adriano Clemente:

“In Tibetan *sgyu ma lha'i dkyil 'khor*: the illusory *mandala* of the deity with the depiction of all the symbolic attributes.”

³²³ Note 186 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001[p. 185], by Adriano Clemente:

“In Tibetan *gzugs brnyan gyi dkyil 'khor*: the *mandala* presented during the initiation, on which one meditates to attain realization, is the counterpart of the spontaneously perfect *mandala*. In general there are three mandalas (*dkyil 'khor rnam pa gsum*): the spontaneously perfect *mandala* as the Base, [consisting in] one's body (*gzhi lhun grub rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor*); the *mandala* of method of images as the Path, [corresponding to] the depictions of the *mandala* with colored powders or paints, etc. (*lam gzugs brnyan thabs kyi dkyil 'khor*); and the *mandala* of the nature of purity as the Fruit, [consisting in] Contemplation (*'bras bu rnam dag rang bzhin gyi dkyil 'khor*). There is also the classification of *mandala* of nature (*rang bzhin gyi dkyil 'khor*), *mandala* of contemplation (*ting nge 'dzin gyi dkyil 'khor*) and *mandala* of images (*gzugs brnyan gyi dkyil 'khor*).”

³²⁴ Note 195 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001[p. 187], by Adriano Clemente:

“The four activities (*spyod lam rnam bzhi*) are: sitting, walking, eating and sleeping.

- ³²⁵ In the original translation of this passage the text read “medial condition” instead of “condition free from conceptual extremes.” Note 196 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2000 [p. 188], by Adriano Clemente explains the meaning of the term “medial condition” or “condition free from conceptual extremes.”
- “The condition free from conceptual extremes (*dbu ma*), characteristic of the *Madhyamaka* tradition, indicates overcoming all conceptual limits, [and] in particular the extremes of eternalism and nihilism.”
- ³²⁶ Note 197 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2000 [p. 188], by Adriano Clemente:
- “In Tibetan *lung chen*. On the basis of the classification into *rgyud*, *lung* and *man ngag*, *Anuyoga* is usually defined as *lung*.”
- ³²⁷ Note 198 to Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2000 [p. 189], by Adriano Clemente:
- “In Tibetan *rdo rje 'dzin pa'i sa*.”
- ³²⁸ The text by Longchenpa cited by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu refers explicitly to the *Anuyoga* and yet speaks of spontaneous liberation, which is the defining feature of the Path of spontaneous liberation corresponding to *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*. Though originally it seemed to me to have been written from the standpoint of *Anu-Ati* (application of methods of *Anu* while keeping to the View or Vision of *Ati*), I must confess I am not sure how to classify it. The text reads (Tibetan text 12, p. 142, 4):
- “Regarding the [indivisibility of] the limitless empty expanse and primordial gnosis as the Base of liberation, the limitless expanse is emptiness that transcends thought inasmuch as it is devoid of any created [and conditioned] phenomenon, effort or change. When self-arising gnosis, which is like its substance, arises in it, one understands that all phenomena are total spontaneous liberation in the condition of the Base: this is called ‘the [indivisibility of] primordial gnosis and the limitless empty expanse of effortless spontaneous liberation’ (*'bad med rang grol gyi dbyings dang ye shes*).
- “Regarding the [indivisibility of] the limitless empty expanse and primordial gnosis of the Path that is the variety of appearances, when everything that manifests in [that] variety arises as the unlimited manifestation of energy, all of [it] liberates itself spontaneously without interruption. Thus in the limitless empty expanse [that contains] the single manifestation of the phenomena of spontaneous perfection there arises the primordial gnosis of pure magical illusion that transcends all limits. Thereby one understands that all phenomena are beyond acceptance and rejection, beyond affirmation and refutation and [hence one goes] beyond all craving: this is called ‘the [indivisibility of] the limitless empty expanse and the primordial gnosis of the completeness of the state of spontaneous perfection’ (*lhun grub rdzogs tshul gyi dbyings dang ye shes*).
- “Regarding the [indivisibility of] the limitless empty expanse and the primordial gnosis of the Fruit that is total spontaneous liberation beyond action, the limitless empty expanse, which does not abide in *samsara* or in *nirvana*, is single, indefinable and beyond striving. When empty primordial gnosis arises in it, beyond the limits of view and contemplation, one understands the sameness of all phenomena of happiness and of suffering: this is called ‘the [indivisibility of] the limitless empty expanse and primordial gnosis of the *dharmata* beyond action’ (*chos nyid bya ba las 'das pa'i dbyings dang ye shes*).
- “By applying [the principle of] primordial gnosis in the limitless empty expanse in a gradual way, one understands the [fundamental] union of the calm state, emptiness and bliss: this is called the [state of] union in which there is nothing to accept or to reject.
- “By applying [the principle of] primordial gnosis in the limitless empty expanse in a direct way, [one] understands that the self-arising *dharmata* transcends any point of view and thus all phenomena dissolve: this is called the direct [entry] in which there is nothing to liberate.
- “By applying [the principle] in a progressing way, [one] understands that in all that exists there is nothing true and thus this is called the ‘progressing way’ in which there is nothing to abandon and nothing to acquire.
- “By applying [this principle] in an instantaneous way, one undergoes spontaneous liberation simultaneously with visible appearances and thus there occurs liberation without any need for action or effort: this is called ‘the *Anuyoga* in which the vision of *dharmata* arises instantly’.
- “Moreover, since the limitless empty expanse and primordial gnosis are not separate, this is the view of equality and nonduality. Since in the [indivisibility of] the limitless empty expanse and primordial gnosis there is no coming and going, this is the view of what never changes from its own position. Since the [indivisibility of] the limitless empty expanse and primordial gnosis is free from limitations and partiality, this is the view of what [has been] manifest from the beginning. Since apart from words that are only used as symbols, there is nothing that depends on something else, this is the view of that which is beyond any dependence.

“In actuality, since the limitless empty expanse is the Base and primordial gnosis is the Path, practitioners who engage with diligence obtain liberation. Since the limitless empty expanse is the cause and primordial gnosis is the Fruit, those of sharp capacities liberate themselves without depending on the external law of cause and effect: therefore [*Anuyoga*] is superior to the lower [vehicles].”

Despite the *Atiyoga* elements in the above description, the last paragraph shows quite clearly that the *Anuyoga* is causally biased.

³²⁹ Furthermore, when the limitless Now corresponding to total plenitude and perfection is disrupted as the present separates the future from the past, the limitless condition is limited by the illusion of sequential time, which entails fragmentariness: the undisrupted *Now*, which is the unmade and unconditioned, is veiled by the *present* as a manifestation of the conditioned.

³³⁰ In order to have the capacity to visualize oneself as a deity while remaining in the state of rigpa, one would have to have consolidated this state to a considerable degree through the practice of *Atiyoga*, for only in this case the absolutely panoramic state of rigpa will not be disrupted by the visualization (which can occur only in the case of those who have acquired the capacity to carry out the most diverse activities in that state). However, if one has already attained a higher realization through a higher Path or vehicle, it would be senseless to undertake the practice of a lower Path or vehicle in order to attain the corresponding realization. Hence *Anuyoga*-style visualizations can be applied in the state of rigpa only by advanced *Atiyoga* practitioners who for one or another reason need to apply an *Anuyoga*-style visualization (for example, because their main practice is not functioning, or because they need to solve a particular problem, etc.), and they would likely apply in the context of the *Ati-Anu* section of *Atiyoga*.

³³¹ After the end of the quotation in the regular text of this book, the following verses follow in the *Tantra* (Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 180):

Listen great being!
The view and behavior of total completeness / plenitude and perfection
are not like those of practices based on cause and effect.
The view and behavior of pure and total Awake awareness are like the sky:
the sky is beyond thoughts and analysis.
Those who seek to reason and analyze
will never achieve sky-like Awakening:
the arising of judgments and analysis is the deviation and hindrance.
Whoever tries to apply sky-like View and Behavior in terms of subject and object
will never realize sky-like Awakening:
the arising of subject and object is the deviation and hindrance.

³³² The *dharmadhatu* is primordial, limitless space, where everything that can be known manifests. As pointed out in a previous footnote, in the *Anuyoga* the *dharmadhatu* is Samantabhadri, the feminine aspect of primordial Buddhahood; in turn, *rang-rig* (self-arisen rigpa or self-arisen Awake awareness), which here corresponds to the *dharmakaya* or Buddha-Mind, is Samantabhadra, the masculine aspect of Buddhahood, of which the myriad phenomena appearing in the *dharmadhatu* are manifestations (when it is asserted that the myriad phenomena appearing in the *dharmadhatu* are manifestations of *rang-rig*, this self-arisen Awake awareness is being considered *qua* Base—i.e., in the most usual sense of *semnyi* [*sems-nyid*])—rather than *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit, which in general is when the Dzogchen teachings apply such terms as *rig-pa*, *rang-rig* and *dharmakaya*).

In the *Anuyoga* it is said that total pleasure is the “child” of both aspects (maternal and paternal), even though these are not two separate elements from the union of which pleasure may originate: having been a single, indivisible reality since beginningless time, they may not be said to constitute a duality. However, there is a reason for this view to be adopted by the *Anuyoga*: in this vehicle the experience of the *dharmadhatu* may arise upon union with the consort, and hence from the standpoint of the male the *bhaga* or female sexual organ is identified with the *dharmadhatu*; in turn, the ensuing flow of bliss seems to be the *effect* of the union with the consort and therefore of the experience of the *dharmadhatu*. Since in the *Anuyoga* *rang-rig* is said to manifest by realizing the inapprehensible character of the flow of bliss, this vehicle views the *dharmadhatu* as cause and *rang-rig* as effect. (As will be shown in the immediately following note, something similar happens in *Mahayoga*.)

Contrariwise, in the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* the *dharmadhatu* is **not** seen as cause and *rang-rig* is **not** seen as effect, for in this vehicle it is perfectly evident that the arising of *rang-rig* is not the effect of any cause: as implied by the particle *rang*, *rang-rig* manifests as a spontaneous occurrence beyond the cause-effect

relation. (It must also be noted that in the context of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo Padmasambhava* explained the indivisibility of the paternal and the maternal aspects represented as Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri (Kunzang [*Kun-bZang*] yab-yum), as the indivisibility of vision and emptiness.)

In fact, throughout the whole of the practice of *Atiyoga* it is equally evident that *rang-rig* is *not* the effect of any cause, for it manifests as a spontaneous occurrence beyond the cause-effect relation. In a note to the chapter on the Path of spontaneous liberation, the fact that throughout Dzogchen *Ati* it is evident that *rang-rig* is *not* the effect of any cause, but that it manifests spontaneously beyond the cause-effect relation, will be illustrated by the method for direct Introduction through pronunciation of the syllable PHAT!

³³³ In the explanation of the four nyendrub (*bsnyen-sgrub bzhi*), the first two correspond to the stage of creation and the last two to the stage of completion; of these last two, the first, which is drubpa (*sgrub-pa*), and which corresponds to the experience of the *dharmadhatu*, is seen as the cause of the second, which is drubpa chenpo (*sgrub-pa chen-po*)—and which in its turn corresponds, at least to some extent, to the *rang-rig* and the yeshe (*ye-shes*) of *Anuyoga*, even though in *Mahayoga* it is explained in terms of *prajña* or sherab (*shes-rab*). (The four nyendrub of *Mahayoga* were explained in a previous note in which Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2000, pp. 208-213 was quoted; following Tibetan Text 6, this quotation explains the four Nyendrub in the context of *Atiyoga*, as the entrance door to the state of *Ati*.)

³³⁴ See note before last.

³³⁵ For example, among the Gelugpa (the newest of Sarmapa schools), the “Great Fifth” Dalai Lama, who was the first Dalai Lama to rule over Tibet, was not only a supreme Dzogchen practitioner, but also an important tertön (*gter-ston*) or “revealer of treasure-teachings (termas [*gter-ma*])” in the Old School or Nyingmapa tradition (toward the end of the regular text of this first part of the book, the terms *terma* and *tertön* will be explained). The same applies to the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (*Rang-‘byung rDo-rje*), head of the Kagyüpa School (which is also a New or Sarmapa school), who was a wonderful Dzogchen practitioner and a great revealer of treasure-teachings or tertön, and also to Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (*‘Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dBang po*) and other Sakyapa Teachers who were extremely important tertöns and Dzogchen Masters. In general, a great number of the most important Masters of the New or Sarmapa schools were among the main Dzogchen Masters, and also among the principal tertöns of this teaching.

Besides, it may be pointed out that the *Anuttarayogatantra* of the Sarmapa contains the *Mahamudra* tradition, which, just like the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, is not based on visualization, but on formless, objectless Contemplation—and which, especially through the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (*Rang-‘byung rDo-rje*), was greatly influenced by the Kham tradition of the “series of the (nature of) mind” or Semde (*sems-sde*) series of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*. (In Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished, the author points out that the first synthesis between *Mahamudra* and Dzogchen *Atiyoga* meditation was carried out by Gampopa (1077-1152). Nonetheless, the *Mahamudra* teaching of the Third Karmapa is widely recognized as the supreme synthesis of both traditions, which served as the base for all successive forms of *Mahamudra*.)

³³⁶ I speak of *kundalini* and *bindu* as two different elements insofar as these are two different Sanskrit words. However, it is important to keep in mind that these two words do not refer to two different entities in a gross physical reality, but to a single subtle reality that is best referred to by the single Tibetan word *thigle* (*thig-le*).

³³⁷ Mi-pham’s way of relating the inner Tantras of the Nyingmapa with the Sarmapa Father, Mother and Nondual *Anuttarayogatantra* was aimed at making the Nyingma teachings palatable to the Sarmapa, and in particular to the Gelugpa. In fact, it so happens that Mipham spent some time in Gelugpa monasteries (cf. Williams, Paul, 1998, pp. 25-26), and he decided, like his teacher, Dza Petrül (Jigme Chökyi Wangpo) Rinpoche (*Dza dPal-sprul ‘Jigs-med Chos-kyi dBang-po Rin-po-che*), to keep being a monk after receiving the Dzogchen transmission of the Longchen Nyingthik (*kLong-chen snying-thig*) revealed by Jigme Lingpa (*‘Jigs-med gLing-pa*). In the same vein, it seems that he decided to present the Nyingma philosophical teachings in a way that would be appealing to the Gelugpa.

In his commentary to the *Bodhicharyavatara* and in many other texts, Mipham argued for the *Total Madhyamaka* (*Mahamadhyamaka*) interpretation of *Madhyamaka* philosophy, and used the term approvingly again and again (cf. Williams, Paul, 1998, pp. 99, note 11, and p. 196). In my own view, the only reason why a Nyingmapa meditator-scholar adhering to *Mahamadhyamaka* would declare himself a *Prasangika** would be for the reasons expounded in the above paragraph. At the same time this would

explain why Mipham, despite having declared himself a *Prasangika*, defended the existence of *swasamvedana* or *swasamvittih* (Tib., *rang-rig*) by declaring it to be a conventional existent that, being true for the world, as such should not be an object of refutation for *Prasangikas*. In fact, Mipham defended *swasamvedana* in purely *Prasangika* terms, as something that should not be rejected by the *Prasangikas* insofar as the latter admit the conventional existence of conventional reality, and their refutations are concerned with the alleged ultimate existence of the conventional, which is always erroneous (see William, Paul, 1998). I have not adopted Ju Mipham's strategy, for both *Madhyamaka* Rangtongpa views—*Swatantrika* and *Prasangika*—are “inferior” to that of *Mahamadhyamaka*, and I do not see why anyone would have to defend the supposed existence of a *swasamvedana* conceived in *Yogachara* and *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika* terms, rather than explaining the *Mahamadhyamaka* conception of it—unless they are trying to validate it in the eyes of the Gelugpa, who do not contemplate the existence of the inner, subtle *Madhyamaka* (Tib., *nang phra-ba'i dbu-ma*), to which *Mahamadhyamaka* belongs. For a lengthier discussion of this, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

*It is generally acknowledged that the View of Dzogchen corresponds to that of the *Madhyamaka Prasangika* insofar as both agree that (in the words of Tibetan Text 5, an extremely important *Tantra* of the Dzogchen Menngagde), “the sense of the view is not to take a (conceptual) position.” Moreover, we have seen that, according to Tibetan Text 8 (Ms A, p. 568), Nagarjuna and Aryadeva were links in the transmission of Dzogchen, and that this led Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu (1988, p. 27) to suggest that the view of *Madhyamaka-Prasangika* had its source in Dzogchen. However, as shown in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, though the *Mahamadhyamaka* view encompasses that of the *Madhyamaka Prasangika*, it is far more comprehensive than the former; furthermore, it has features that make it compatible with essential Dzogchen tenets other than the mere nonconceptuality of the View—such as the continuity of Base, Path and Fruit, the conception of the conditioned and unconditioned and of what the *Mahayana* refers to as “ultimate truth,” the use of concepts such as that of kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) and kunzhi namshe (*kun-gzhi nram-shes*), and the very reference to a *swasamvedana* (with regard to the concepts of kunzhi namshe and *swasamvedana*, it must be reiterated that neither the Dzogchen teachings nor *Mahamadhyamaka* conceive them either in the same way as the *Yogacharas* or in the same way as the *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogacharas*). For further details, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

³³⁸ Both the Nyingmapas and the Sarmapas developed a Tibetan terminology that is far more precise than the original Sanskrit. For example, in Napper, Elizabeth, 2003, which comments on Gelugpa philosophy, we read (p. 69):

“Of particular assistance is the development in Tibetan of very precise technical terminology that makes it possible to extract from the more loosely worded Indian texts greater specificity of meaning than might otherwise be gained.”

³³⁹ For example, in the Nyingma translation of the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* (a *Tantra* that, as we have seen, also exists in the Sarmapa system, where it is a father *Anuttarayogatantra*), we read (quoted in Tibetan Text 6 [A: p. 167, 3; B: p. 21, 7], in its turn cited in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p 201):

“All dharmas are fundamentally empty,

“All dharmas are utterly pure from the beginning,

“All dharmas are entirely luminous clarity,

“All dharmas are by nature *nirvana*,

“All dharmas are perfect Awakening.

“Just this is Total (Plenitude and) Perfection (Dzogpa Chenpo).”

³⁴⁰ As we have seen, katak (*ka-dag*) is the “primordial purity” aspect of our true condition of Dzogchen *qua* Base, *qua* Path and *qua* Fruit, and it corresponds to voidness. Common sense tends to conceive voidness as nothingness, and therefore as the opposite of fullness or plenitude; however, voidness corresponds to the *dharmadhatu*, which is the undivided expanse where all phenomena manifest, and which in realization is pervaded by a panoramic awareness that is indivisible from it. Since this expanse (or expanse / awareness) is an uninterrupted continuum of plenitude, whoever does not feel separate from it (i.e., whoever is in the state of Dzogchen *qua* Path or of Dzogchen *qua* Fruit) is in a state of absolute plenitude.

Furthermore, in the *Madhyamaka* Rangtongpa sub-schools, voidness means that no entity exists inherently, or, which is the same, that there are no self-existing entities. This *clearly implies* that we are not separate entities in a universe that is the sum of countless separate entities, but that our true nature is a continuum of fullness and plenitude (a fact that was discussed in a previous chapter of the regular text of this book, in terms of the positions of those who assume the existence of a physical universe, of those who claim that all

is mind, and of Skeptics and so on). Moreover, since voidness implies that *qua* Base we ourselves are not separate from this continuum of fullness and plenitude and therefore do not find ourselves at a distance from it, and since the realization of voidness implies that in the Contemplation that is the Path and in the Fruit we are beyond the illusion that we are separate from it or that we find ourselves at a distance from it, there can be no doubt that the *katak* aspect of our true nature corresponds to “fullness” or “plenitude.”

In the use of the term Dzogchen to which this note was appended, the word *katak* refers to the Fruit, to which it is applied in the Anuyogatantras and Mahayogatantras of the Nyingmapa (whereas in the *Atiyoga* it is equally applied to the Base, to the Path and to the Fruit); therefore, in this context the emphasis should be on the ensuing condition of plenitude.

³⁴¹ The *Kalachakra* adds to the ten traditional exalted stages (*'phags pa'i sa*) the “stage without obstacles” (*bar cad med pa'i sa*) and the “totally liberated stage” (*rnam par grol ba'i sa*). Here the ten stages are specified as been exalted (*arya*) because the *Kalachakra* (and the *Lam 'bras* of the Sakyapas as well) posits another set of twelve stages, which are supposedly attained on the path of preparation and which are known under the general name of the twelve stages of contemplation (*ting nge 'dzin kyi sa*). These constitute a branch of the six-fold yoga.

Thanks are due to Elio Guarisco for the research done in this regard.

³⁴² This is so according to a text called *mchog tu 'mi 'gyur pa* (Toh.2219?), which lists from top to bottom the twelve stages of the *Vajra Nucleus' Ornament Tantra* or *rDo rje snying rgyan rgyud* (Toh.451) as: *kun tu 'od, bdud rtsi 'od, nam mka'i 'od, rdo rje'i 'od, rin chen 'od, pad ma'i 'od, sangs rgyas kyi las byed pa'i sa, dpe med pa'i sa, dpe thams cad kyi dpe rab tu rtogs par byed pa'i sa, shes rab kyi 'od bla na med pa'i sa, thams cad mkhyen pa nyid 'od gsal ba chen po'i sa, so so'i bdag nyid rig pa mnal 'byor pa'i sa*. Also, some Tibetan Masters say that these stages taught in the *rDo rje snying rgyan rgyud* are Buddha stages only; others say that they are exalted (*arya*) stages; still others associate them with the twelve stages of the six-fold yoga of *Kalachakra*. The Indian Masters and the Jonangpas explained them as been present in the Base, as the Path and as the Fruit, and gave explanations regarding each of the twelve (see Kongtrül's *Shecha Kunchab* [*Shes-bya Kun-khyab*: Tibetan Text 11, Chinese book form edition], vol. III, p.523).

Thanks are due to Elio Guarisco for the research done in this regard.

³⁴³ As we have seen, the Mahayana speaks of ten stages (*bhumi, sa*) of the bodhisattvas, and asserts that at the end of the tenth *bodhisattva* stage there is Awakening, the Buddha stage (*sangs rgyas kyi sa*), which according to some sources (for example, Rongzompa) is called *Samantaprabha* (*kun tu 'od*). The Anuttarayogatantras list a greater number of levels, but this number is not always the same—it can be ten plus one as in the Mahayana, or twelve (as in the two Tantras mentioned in this paragraph of the regular text), thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, etc.—and the names given the various levels are not the same either.

For example, the *Samvarodaya Tantra* (Dg.K, Vol.Kha, f.276a1-2, Toh.373), upon setting forth the correspondence between *bodhisattva* stages and sacred places (*gnas*), speaks only of ten stages, which bear the traditional names. Alamkakalasa's *Commentary to the Vajra Garland* (Toh.1795), an Explanatory *Tantra* of the *Guhyasamaja*, speaks of thirteen levels—the last, which is the Buddha stage, being called “lady”.

The *Abhidana Tantra* (Toh.369) mentions thirteen stages: the usual ten (which are same in name and meaning), plus the “incomparable” (*dpe med pa*, which is the eleventh), the one possessing wisdom (*ye shes ldan*, which is the twelfth), and the diamond stage (*rdo rje'i sa*, which is the thirteenth).

The *Vajra Garland Tantra* (Toh.445) speaks of fourteen stages, the *Mahamudratilaka Tantra* of fifteen. It seems that there are other descriptions as well.

In any case, the ten stages spoken of in the Sutras, such as *mudita* and so on, are so called when the cause is named after the result. The stages such as the *samantaprabha* are so called when they are named after examples or similar features. In yet another approach, they are named after sacred places. In this last description, Abhaya, in his *Cluster of Secret Instructions* (Toh.1198), in addition to the ten stages called sacred place, subsidiary sacred place, etc., explains other two stages (spoken of in the *Samputa Tantra* Toh.381): *'thun gcog* and *nye ba'i 'thun gcog*, which are the stage of admiration (*mos spyod kyi sa*) and the Buddha stage, respectively. Durjayacandra's *Commentary to the Hevajra Tantra called Kaumudi*, (Toh.1185) explains *'thun gcod*, which he calls *dpe med ye shes*, as the eleventh stage, and *nye ba'i 'thun gcod*, which he calls *ye she che*, as the twelfth. The thirteenth, not included in these twelve, is the adamant stage spoken of above in the *Abhidana Tantra*.

In general, the twelve stages correspond to the ceasing of the winds of the twelve “conjunctions” or of the twelve links of dependent origination. The sixteen stages correspond to the sixteen aspects of the four joys

or to the sixteen emptinesses. In the systems that assert more than thirteen stages, it would be necessary to check which correspond to the Buddha stage, and if the extra stages are classifications within the Buddha stage or are assigned to the phase prior to enlightenment.

See Kongtrül's *Shecha Kunchab* (*Shes-bya Kun-khyab*: Tibetan Text 11, Chinese book form edition), pp.514-515, 529, 552-553.

Thanks are due to Elio Guarisco for the research done in this regard.

³⁴⁴ There are Anuttarayogatantras of the Sarmapa that refer to their final realization by the term "rainbow body;" however, this realization is not the same as the one that the Dzogchen teachings refer to by the same name. It must also be remarked that, though the *Anuyoga* is acknowledged to allow the most consummate practitioners to attain one special type of death, it does not allow them to attain the same four modes of death as the *Atiyoga*.

³⁴⁵ Among the other terms used to refer to Dzogchen and/or to the *Atiyoga* are: *gza' gtad dang bral ba*, *lhun gyis grub pa*, *rang byung ye shes*, *bya btsal dang bral ba*, *bde ba chen po*, *gnyis su med pa*, *mtha' ril ma spangs bral ba's rang lugs chen po*, *gzhi ji bzhing bar lta be*, etc. These terms are discussed in the *Ati Changsem Gongdzö* (*A ti byang sems dgongs mdzod ces bya ba*), which it would be utterly illegitimate to reproduce here.

³⁴⁶ Dudjom Rinpoche (Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I, p. 244) compares the *Hetuyana* (Causal vehicle) or *Hetulakshanayana* (Causal vehicle of characteristics; Tib., *gyu tsennyi thekpa* [*rgyu mtshan-nyid/phyi'i theg-pa*]), discussed in the first of the following paragraphs, with the *Phalayana* or Result-based vehicle (Tib., *Drebu Thekpa* [*'bras-bu theg-pa*]), discussed in the second:

"Therefore, in the vehicle of (the distinction of) characteristics (by means of dialectics), the nature of mind (corresponding to primordial gnosis) is merely perceived as the causal basis of Buddhahood. Since it is held that Buddhahood is obtained under the condition whereby two provisions (that of merits and that of wisdom) increasingly multiply, and since the purifying doctrines which form the causal basis of *nirvana* are made into the Path, it is called the Causal vehicle (*rgyu'i theg-pa*). Therein a sequence in which cause precedes result is admitted.

"According to the vehicle of mantras, on the other hand, the nature of mind abides primordially and intrinsically as the essence of the result, consisting in the kayas and primordial gnoses. The nature of mind is thereby established as the Base within oneself already at this moment as the aim of attainment. It is then established as the Path through its functions of bringing about recognition and removing the provisional stains that suddenly arise by means of inducing the apprehension of isness, and it is established as the Fruit through its function of actualizing this very Base. Since a sequence in which cause precedes effect is not really distinguished therein, it is called the Result-based vehicle (*'bras-bu'i theg-pa*) and the Vehicle of the indestructible condition (*rdo-rje theg-pa*)."

³⁴⁷ As will be seen immediately following in the regular text of the book, in Dzogchen *Atiyoga* the Path consists in the progressive unveiling of the Base and, therefore, rather than involving the production of something, it is based on what has (been) in the Base from beginningless time. Contrariwise, on the Path of transformation corresponding to Tantrism it is necessary to *produce* visualizations and other experiences that originally were not manifest. It is for that reason, among other things, that I point out that the Base-Path-Fruit continuity (gyü [*rgyud*]: *Tantra*) is less perfect in *Vajrayana* or Tantrism than it is in Dzogchen *Atiyoga*.

³⁴⁸ In *Anuttarayoga* and *Mahayoga* one is supposed to keep aware that whatever one visualizes is void of self-existence or substance, but still one is creating a new reality and while one does so one has no direct awareness of the Base, which (is) unconditioned. In *Anuyoga* one is supposed to carry out the instantaneous, lhundrub (spontaneously perfect) visualization in the state of rigpa or Awake Awareness, but as Rongzompa pointed out, one does not really have this capacity and therefore the generation stage entails fragmentation. Only *Atiyoga* involves, from the very onset of the Path (which, as will be shown later on, consists in the manifestation of tawa [*lta-ba*] or Vision upon Direct introduction), the direct unveiling of the unconditioned nature of the Base in the state of rigpa or Awake awareness.

³⁴⁹ Of course, even in the Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or *Upadeshavarga*, which might very well be the most characteristic series of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, there are secondary practices, such as, for example, some of the *semdzin* (*sems-'dzin*), some of the *khorda rushen* (*'khor-'das ru-shan*), the *zernga* (*zer-lnga*) and so on, in which specific experiences are induced or visualizations are generated; it is in the main practice that it is not necessary to construct or produce anything specific. Let us take the two levels of Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* as an example:

In Tekchö (*khregs-chod*) thoughts arise spontaneously of their own accord, as they have always done, so that the only difference between this practice and the experience of an ordinary individual is that, in the second case, thoughts veil the Base and fail to liberate themselves spontaneously, as a consequence of which samsaric propensities (*vasana*, bagchag [*bag-chags*]) are established in the individual, whereas in the practice of Tekchö thoughts liberate themselves spontaneously rather than veiling the Base, and therefore no samsaric traces are established. If we consider the natural arising of thoughts as a generation or creation stage (*kyerim* [*bskyed-rim*]), we have to conclude that in Tekchö this stage is not contrived but self-generated, as corresponds to the principle of lhundrub inherent to our own true nature. In their turn, ideally the stage of completion or perfection (*dzogrim* [*rdzogs-rim*]) ought to occur simultaneously with the arising of thoughts and should not depend on an action on the part of the illusory subject—which is how it occurs in the third type of spontaneous liberation that will be considered in the description of Tekchö in Part Two of this book (a type of spontaneous liberation that takes place right as the thought arises, so that thoughts are like drawings on water, which dissolve as they arise, and which neither conceal the true condition of the Base nor give rise to samsaric traces).

In Thögel (*thod-rgal*) what arise spontaneously of their own accord are the visions necessary for the method to function (see the section on this practice in Part Two of this book). Furthermore, the systemic loops consisting in the runaway (i.e., the spontaneous, uncontrolled exacerbation) of tensions toward their logical extreme and subsequent spontaneous liberation, together with the spontaneous liberation of the whole of dualistic delusion (a spontaneous liberation that consists in the dissolution of the illusory mental subject that feels itself to be separate from the visions), develop in an equally spontaneous, lhundrub manner. Though the principle of lhundrub means that whatever occurs—the manifestation of visions, the development of tensions, and the spontaneous liberation of these tensions together with the whole of delusion—does so spontaneously rather than being the result of actions carried out by the illusory subject, the runaway of tensions depends on the mental subject's automatic reactions before the self-manifesting visions in a condition that is subject to the dynamic of the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy, which does not allow the development of dualism.

³⁵⁰ **We can distinguish as many aspects as we want in the undivided Base, but for their purpose, the most common division the Dzogchen teachings make is into the three aspects which are essence, nature and energy. Since the Base is the Buddha-nature, we can illustrate it with a statue of Buddha, which is an undivided unity, but in which we can distinguish its form, its color and the material of which it is made. However, we could as well distinguish a fourth aspect if we deemed it useful, which could be, say, the indivisibility of the aforementioned three aspects. To which we could add the material's brightness, its smoothness, or whatever else we deemed useful. This is why the Buddhist teachings divide the Buddha-nature into three aspects, which are the three kayas, or into four, if we add the *swabhavikaya* which is the indivisibility of the three kayas, or into five if, so that the aspects in question may correspond to the five wisdoms, we add the *vajrakaya* to the four aspects we have already distinguished. Etc.**

³⁵¹ The Sanskrit term *karuna*, which is normally rendered into English as “compassion,” is translated into Tibetan both as thukje (*thugs-rje*) and as nyingje (*snying-rje*): both thuk (*thugs*) and nying (*snying*) mean “heart,” while je (*rje*) may be translated as “soft and noble.”

Why should manifest appearances and the process of their uninterrupted arising be referred to by a term meaning “compassion”? Fully Awake individuals (*anuttara samyak sambuddha*) will continue to be physiologically alive after Awakening—rather than dying after a few days, as occurs in the case of solitary realizers or *pratyekabuddhas*—because of the spontaneous arising of compassion; therefore, it is as a function of **compassion that the thukje aspect of the Base, corresponding to uninterrupted manifestation of phenomena, will continue to function in their continuum** (even though, of course, it will no longer be experienced as the succession of a multiplicity of phenomena, for fully Awake individuals are beyond experience as such and do neither interpret nor experience this aspect of the Base as such).

It could be objected that this may be so in the case of Buddhas, but not in the case of deluded individuals, to whom appearances continue to manifest inexorably even in the absence of compassion. However, the point is that the Base is the Buddha-nature with the three kayas, and it is only insofar as sentient beings experience themselves as creatures inherently separate from the rest of the Base that they fail to realize that appearances are the function of compassion. Despite the fact that only fully Awake Ones, who do not experience themselves as beings thrown into the world by an external power and do not feel separate from the Buddha-nature that is the Base, are fully aware that the thukje aspect of the Base continues to manifest because of compassion, the same is the case with those sentient beings in *samsara* who fail to realize this to be so. Therefore also in their case it is correct to say that the thukje aspect of the Base is a function of the compassion inherent to Buddhahood.

³⁵² A pot, a jug, a jar, a glass and all other hollow containers are said to be empty when they do not contain anything liquid or solid and therefore we can fill them with anything liquid or solid we may wish to put in them. Now suppose that, in a loosely similar sense, we say that a mirror is inherently empty: the statement will make sense if what we are trying to say is that the mirror does not exhibit any fixed image, nor is filled with image-obstructing matter, and therefore it can “fill itself” with the reflection of whatever is put in front of it.

However, when a pot, a jug, a jar, a glass or any other hollow container is filled with walnuts, for it to be filled with almonds it will have to be emptied of the walnuts that had been filling it so far. This is not the case with a mirror, which does not need to be emptied of whatever had been filling it in order to “fill itself” with the image of whatever new object is placed in front of it. The fact that the mirror does not need to be actively emptied of the reflections it contains for it to fill itself with a new reflection may be taken to mean that, even when filled with images, a mirror is empty (for it is still ready to fill itself with new images), and therefore that the images that fill the mirror are also empty (in the sense in which space is said to be empty: in that they are nonobstructing). Therefore, in a very particular sense, it is possible to say that, unlike the emptiness of a pot, a jug, a jar, a glass or any other hollow container, the emptiness of a mirror is somehow inherent to it, and also that whatever fills a mirror is as empty as the mirror itself. Furthermore, one of the eight similes of illusion taught by Shakyamuni was that of a reflected image, used to show that despite the fact that phenomena appear, they lack a self-nature—and therefore that they are utterly empty in the rangtong or *swabhava shunyata* sense of the word (i.e., as voidness of self-existence).

The Base—or, which is the same in this context, spontaneous awareness or primordial gnosis—has been illustrated by the simile of the mirror precisely insofar as emptiness in the above sense is inherent to the mirror: just like the mirror, primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness *qua* Base will manifest any content, depending on contributory conditions. (In the case of the mirror, the contributory conditions are the external objects we place in front of it; in the case of the Base, in relation to which nothing is external, the contributory conditions, which are therefore beyond the distinction into internal and external, are those allowing for the manifestation of particular sense data. It must be noted that all sense data are segments of the continuum of the Base’s energy or thukje [*thugs-rje*] aspect, on which perception depends and which may be referred to as “objective reality.” See Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)

The above emptiness is the katak (*ka-dag*) aspect of the Base, and the Base’s disposition to manifest phenomena—i.e., its luminosity—is a function of its lhundrub (*lhun-grub*) aspect. In terms of a different terminology, that emptiness is the essence or ngowo (*ngo-bo*) aspect of the Base, and the Base’s disposition to manifest phenomena is its nature or rangzhin (*rang-bzhin*) aspect, source of the unimpeded manifestation of phenomena that makes up the Base’s energy or thukje (*thugs-rje*) aspect. In their turn, as noted above, the phenomena of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base are utterly void in the double sense of lacking inherent existence (rangtong or *swabhava shunya*) and of not obstructing the capacity of spontaneous awareness to “fill itself” with different contents.

If primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness *qua* Base were not empty in the above sense, it would necessarily manifest the same phenomena all the time, and the constant change that characterizes human experience would be impossible: it is precisely because primordial gnosis or spontaneous awareness is empty in the sense of not bearing any fixed images, and because it continues to be empty even when it is filled with images, that it can manifest all kinds of images. In turn, it is because these images are void that they do not obstruct the manifestation of new images: they are void (1) insofar as they can manifest because of the emptiness and reflectiveness of awareness; (2) insofar as they are not obstructing and thus

need not be removed in order for the mirror to “fill itself” with new images; and (3) insofar as they are like the empty images that arise by virtue of a play of light (so to say). In fact, this is why they are neither self-existent nor subsistent, being void in the rangtong sense of lacking inherent existence. The fact that all relative entities of *samsara* can only appear and have their existence thanks to the essence or ngowo aspect—i.e., the voidness—and the nature or rangzhin aspect of the primordial gnosis that is the Base and true nature of all phenomena, implies that these phenomena (which are manifestations of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base) lack a self-nature or substance.

The rangtong emptiness or emptiness of self-existence of the myriad phenomena is confirmed by the fact that, when subjected to analysis, those phenomena are not found as self-existent entities: we find that whatever we may have taken to be an entity, is in fact nothing but an aggregate of other entities (the ones constituting the parts of the entity under analysis); when we analyze the other entities (i.e., the “parts”), we find that whatever we may have taken to be an entity, is in fact nothing but an aggregate of other entities (the ones constituting the parts of the part under analysis)... and so on and on into microscopic levels that we cannot reach with our bare senses and with regard to which, no matter how ideological the sciences may be, we have no alternative but to resort to contemporary physics—which, as we have seen, clearly implies that there are no inherently existing entities at any level of the dimensional spectrum.

From another perspective, it is clear that no samsaric, relative phenomenon of our experience, whether subject or object, exists inherently or independently, insofar as all phenomena depend on the spurious subject-object dichotomy that arises from the delusory valuation of the directional threefold thought structure and the concomitant dualistic, directional structuring of consciousness. And those phenomena that appear as object also depend on being singled out by the complex mind-and-mental-factors (mind-and-mental-events) and on being recognized and perceived in terms of a concept.

As we have seen, the concepts in terms of which we perceive our objects depend on the category of thought that makes up its *genus proximum* and on the category that makes up its *differentiam specificam*; therefore, our phenomenon can also be said to depend on these two categories and therefore on the whole of the phenomena that, upon being grouped together, gave rise to these categories. And since the above categories are established in relation to all other categories, our phenomenon can be said to depend on the totality of categories, and on the whole of the phenomena that, upon being grouped together, gave rise to the totality of categories.

Therefore, all phenomena—including the mental subject and all of the segments of the continuum of appearance that the mind-and-mental-factors or mind-and-mental-events complex can single out and establish as objects (whether of the kind that we consider to be mental or of the type that we consider to be physical)—*qua* phenomena are dependent and, as such, are empty of self-existence and as such exist relatively rather than absolutely. However, *in truth* they all are the continuum that is the absolute reality, which as such has no *genus proximum* and no *differentiam specificam*, and therefore is absolutely unthinkable and ineffable. Furthermore, no map corresponds exactly to the territory of the given, and nothing whatsoever that can be asserted concerning any entity can exactly correspond to it or exhaust it. This fact implies the rangtong emptiness or emptiness of self-existence of entities, for the fact that a cart can be equally said *to be a cart* and *not to be a cart* implies that it is not *inherently a cart*, and the fact that a cart can be equally said *to be* and *not to be* implies that it *does not exist inherently as an entity*.

(It must be noted that in the Dzogchen teachings the simile of the mirror may also be used to represent the final blending of the tsel [*rtsal*] and rölpa [*rol-pa*] energies that takes place when a practitioner reaches the highest levels in the practices of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] and the Yangthik [*yang-thig*]: this is so because at this point, as it is proper to the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy, all manifests beyond the subject object duality and beyond the division into an internal dimension or jing [*dbyings*] and an external one.)

³⁵³ Some teachers insist that the energy of thukje aspect of the Base does *not* consist in the unceasing process of manifestation of phenomena and in these phenomena themselves, but in the unimpededness that permits the manifestation of phenomena, which may be noticed in the instant preceding manifestation. The point behind this is easily understood in terms of the representation of the Base in terms of the simile of a mirror, which compares phenomena to the reflections in the mirror—for in fact it is not permissible to claim that the reflections that manifest in a mirror *are* the mirror. However, neither is it permissible to claim that they are something different or separate from the mirror, for they (are) a function of the mirror, and they (are) certainly not outside the

mirror or separate from it. The point is that they are *nothing at all*, for, in Longchenpa's words (Longchen Rabjam [1998], p. 84):

“In accordance with the eight traditional metaphors for illusoriness, an examination of phenomena as forms of emptiness, clearly apparent yet unthinkable, ineffable and void... determines their equalness in having no identity. One knows the basic space of unchanging emptiness through these natural manifestations of the nature of mind.”

Likewise (Longchen Rabjam [2001], p. 156):

“Using one of the eight metaphors for illusoriness, they are understood to be reflections that manifest clearly without existing anywhere, outwardly or inwardly.”

What the Semde teachings represent with the simile of a mirror is the nature of mind, primordial awareness, bodhichitta, thigle chenpo or however we call the primordial condition. Phenomena manifest naturally as the display, dynamic energy and adornment of this nature of mind, primordial awareness or however we call it—and, as seen in the quotation, they (are) *natural manifestations of this nature of mind or however we call it*. As Longchenpa noted, one may say that the reflections are the mirror in the sense in which one uses the name “sun” to refer to the rays of the sun when one says, “Sit in the midday sun.” Furthermore, isn't it said that the world such as it presents itself to our impure vision is the *nirmanakaya*? And isn't it said that the *dharmakaya* (and in general the single nature of all reality) is utterly free from substances other than itself—which is what is referred to in Sanskrit by the term *parashunya* and in Tibetan by the term *zhentong* (*gzhan stong*)? If phenomena were different and separate from the Base (or from the nature of mind, primordial awareness, or however we call it), we could not say either that the world such as it presents itself to our impure vision is the *nirmanakaya*, or that the *dharmakaya* (and in general the Base that is the single true condition of all reality) is utterly free from substances other than itself, or that the whole of reality is the single sphere (thigle chik [*thig le gcig*], the total sphere (thigle chenpo [*thig le chen po*]), or the single condition of Dzogchen *qua* Base. And the Base has only three aspects: it does not have a fourth aspect consisting in the manifestation of phenomena and the phenomena manifested. The point is that zhengyi ngöpo tongpanyi (*gzhan gyi dngos po stong pa nyid*; Skt. *paravastushunyata*?) or “absence of substances other than the single true condition of all reality” and rangzhinggyi tongpanyi (*rang bzhing gyis stong pa nyid*; Skt. *swabhava shunyata*) or “absence of the self-existence of phenomena” imply each other, for, as noted above, insofar as phenomena (are) not different or separate from the single Base they cannot be self-existent or substantial (which is why it was said that phenomena [are] nothing at all) and insofar as phenomena are not self-existent or substantial there can be no substances other than the single Base. Furthermore, if phenomena were separate or different from the thukje aspect of the Base, the Dzogchen teachings could not claim that energy manifests in the three different ways that are dang (*gdangs*), rölpa (*rol pa*) and tsel (*rtsal*), for the energy aspect of the Base would be limited to *that which precedes* the manifestation of any of these three forms of manifestation of energy (and in particular what precedes the manifestation of the dang energy as thoughts, insofar as some particular instructions ask us to recognize as the thukje aspect of the Base the unimpededness preceding the manifestation of thought).

Since phenomena, including thoughts, visions, and material essents, (are) unthinkable and ineffable, anything we may assert concerning them—among other things, either that they (are) [the energy of] the Base or that they (are) something different from the [energy of the] Base—is a misrepresentation. Therefore, the only way we would be correct no matter what we said with regard to them, would be by being free of what Chandrakirti called “own mind,” which consists in taking as *true* whatever we think or assert without the intention to deceive others and taking the contrary of this as *false*—and which is a synonym of “affirming from one's heart,” “making self-directed / interior-directed assertions” or “having theses of one's own” (cf. Capriles [2005] and also [electronic publication 2004], as well as the notes in Volume II of this book). Saying something without own mind and hence being correct is what in a not perfectly precise terminology is called “other-directed” or “exterior-directed” assertions (Tib. *zhen ngo kelen* [*gzhan ngo khas len*]). However, it is also true that, since, as we have seen, thoughts are nothing at all, there is no process of arising and dissolution of thought and other types of appearances, and so properly speaking the thukje aspect of the Base may not be defined as the uninterrupted manifestation and dissolution of phenomena. Nonetheless, if this were the reason why it is claimed that the thukje aspect of the Base

is the unimpededness that precedes the manifestation of thought, there would be no need to specify that the thukje aspect of the Base, rather than being the uninterrupted manifestation of phenomena, is the unimpededness that precedes manifestation, for the aspect in question does not change in any way upon the manifestation of thought (i.e., upon the manifestation of nothing-at-all) and the dissolution of thought (i.e., the dissolution of nothing-at-all).

Taking only the above into consideration, we should conclude that the instructions advising us to recognize the thukje aspect of the Base as the unimpededness immediately preceding *the manifestation of thought* respond to pith instructions that are skillful means for recognizing the characteristic *disposition* of each of the three aspects of the Base, and as such does not involve the problem inherent in trying to explain the nature of phenomena, which as we have seen lies in the fact that properly speaking they can neither be or not be the [energy aspect of the] Base. In fact, as the fact that attaining realization implies no longer perceiving phenomena as separate from the energy aspect of the single Base makes it clear, these instructions *would by no means imply that phenomena are not the energy aspect of the Base*.

Only if we established that previously to manifestation the three aspects of the Base should be referred to as the three primordial wisdoms which are essence or ngowo, nature or rangzhin and energy or thukje, but that during manifestation they should be called *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya* (*qua* Base when *samsara* is manifest, *qua* Path when *nirvana* manifests transitorily in the Contemplation state while on the Path, and *qua* Fruit when *nirvana* is irreversibly manifest as the Fruit), in spite of the above arguments making the point that there is no difference between the Base previously to manifestation and the Base during manifestation, would it be valid to identify the thukje aspect with the unimpededness of the potentiality for manifestation as it becomes evident previously to manifestation.

In fact, as commented in paragraph before last, it is only in the conotext of pith instructions that are skillful means for recognizing the characteristic *disposition* of each of the three aspects of the Base, that sometimes we find explanations of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base like the ones discussed in this note, and on the basis of conventions such as those discussed in the preceding paragraph.

³⁵⁴ It was to a way of apprehending tsel energy that the first Heidegger was referring to when he stated that “in understanding the world according the mode of being of the fall, it takes on the character of *reality*” (Heidegger, 1927; Spanish translation 1951, 1971, p. 221 *et seq*):

“...one begins by conceiving entities as a conglomerate of things “before the eyes” (*res*). *Being* takes on the sense of “*reality*.” The fundamental determination of being comes to be substantiality...

“...as a means of knowing, real intuitive knowledge has always been valid... Insofar as independence and an “in-itself” character are inherent to “reality,” the question regarding the sense of “reality” is linked to the question of the possible independence of the “real” “before consciousness,” or of the possible transcendence of consciousness to reach the “sphere” of the “real.” The possibility of making an ontological analysis of “reality” that may result sufficient, depends on the degree to which the being of that from which there must be independence, of that which must be transcended, becomes clear [to us]...”

Heidegger realized that, when the entities of tsel energy he called “intra-worldly” manifested as “reality,” consciousness experienced them as *being* in themselves, independently of human consciousness, and therefore that common sense did not need the independent existence of these entities to be proven, for it was inherent to the very mode of being of human consciousness, in apprehending “reality,” to experience those entities as being *in themselves*. However, the metaphor of tsel energy is that of a crystal prism through which white light passes, thereby being separated into a spectrum that is projected into an external dimension: this is due to the fact that, though the samsaric experience of tsel energy is as explained by Heidegger, *the realization of Dzogchen* shows very clearly that the phenomena of tsel energy do not constitute an independent, self-existing external reality. (Higher realizations of the Dzogchen practice of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] involve going beyond this mode of apprehension of reality because the final result of this practice involves the blending of tsel energy and rölpa [*rol-pa*] energy—the latter being utterly free of the illusion of reality and substantiality.)

The distinction between “*reality*” and “*fantasy*” may be reduced to that between tsel and dang (*gdangs*) energy. For example, hallucinations and the experience of visions of spirits and the like, which seem to manifest in an external dimension, are manifestations of tsel (*rtsal*) energy: as such we experience them as a self-existing external *reality* with the capacity to produce effects—which is precisely how we experience

the so-called “physical” world. We fear the vision of a spirit insofar as we take the spirit to be *real* in Heidegger’s sense, and as such to be beyond our control (unlike the figments of our imagination, which we can control at will), and insofar as we believe it has the type of capacity to produce effects—and in particular to harm our “physical body”—physical reality in general may have (even though we think a spirit is not solid, we fear it insofar as we believe it has supernatural powers). Conversely, so far as we recognize figments of our imagination or fantasy to be so, we do not fear them in the same way, for we can control them, and beside we are aware that they lack the type of capacity to produce effects that tsel energy possesses (we do not believe they can harm our “physical body” the way “physical” reality can harm it). Therefore, even in the case of phenomena that are widely regarded as “supernatural,” but which manifest in the external dimension, we have a belief in their independent, *real* existence that we do not have in the case of phenomena of the internal dimension.

(The above explains why we cannot be *utterly free* until we have totally reintegrated the tsel energy: so long as we do not do so, we are liable to experience fear of being harmed by the independently existing reality we experience tsel energy as being, and so our Contemplation may be interrupted by occurrences taking place in this type of energy. Furthermore, so long as we have not reintegrated tsel energy we can experience pain, and thus we are liable to experience fear with regard to this possibility.)

³⁵⁵ This is why the phenomena of the rölpa mode of manifestation of energy are the key to some of the higher Dzogchen practices (in the context of the Menngagde [*man-ngag-sde*] of *Upadeshavarga*, they are the condition of possibility of the practices of Thögel [*thod-rgal*] and the Yangthik [*yang-thig*]).

³⁵⁶ Many teachings, especially in the *Vajrayana*, rather than positing *nirvana* as the Fruit, assert the latter to consist in going beyond fear of *samsara* and desire for *nirvana*. However, such a Fruit can only result from the recurrent realization of the single taste of *samsara* and *nirvana* that takes place when the true nature of *samsara* (and of *nirvana* as well) is realized in the manifestation of *nirvana*. Furthermore, since it is in *nirvana* that the single taste of *samsara* and *nirvana* is realized, to identify realization with going beyond fear of *samsara* and desire for *nirvana* would only make sense in the case of individuals who are so familiar with *nirvana* or so firmly established in it that, firstly, they no longer can be enticed by the projects of *samsara*, and secondly, they no longer hope for *nirvana* or fear *samsara*. Since this amounts to being utterly beyond hopes and fears, it can only result from having overcome to a really great extent the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought through the repeated dissolution of delusion in the manifestation of *nirvana*. At any rate, so long as we have preferences concerning *samsara* and *nirvana*, or discriminate between these conditions, it would be a lie to say that we have attained the realization of the sameness of both conditions.

Though the above conception is fully in agreement with the Dzogchen teachings, the latter have radical methods whereby the total surpassing of *samsara* in the uninterrupted manifestation of *nirvana* can be achieved, and finally one of the four modes of death exclusive to the Dzogchen teachings may be attained. In order to reach such Fruits, Dzogchen practitioners will have to spend periods facing conditions that are most effective in activating the manifestation of *samsara*, so that again and again delusion arises and immediately, liberates itself instantly and spontaneously—until the propensities for the manifestation of *samsara* are fully burned out and finally the individual, even under these conditions, can remain unwaveringly established in the condition of *nirvana*.

³⁵⁷ The nondual, delusion-free state in which the nondual primordial gnosis that is the Base has become perfectly evident is designated in the Dzogchen teachings by the term rigpa (*rig-pa*), which corresponds to the Sanskrit *vidya*, and which I translate in this book as “Awake awareness,” as “Truth” (in the sense of absence of error or delusion), or as Presence (the term is capitalized to make it clear that it should not be understood in the dualistic Platonic sense of “being before”), according to the case. Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu generally renders the same term as “Knowledge,” which in translations of his teachings I write with a capital K in order to contrast its meaning with the one the word has in ordinary language, which corresponds to its dualistic etymology (as we have seen, according to Paul Claudel, knowledge [*la connaissance*] is the co-birth [*la co-naissance*] of the subject and the object—which clearly refers to the state characterized by dualism and delusion).

I decided to translate the words rigpa and *vidya* as Awake awareness because in the Dzogchen teachings the term semnyi (*sems-nyid*), which is best translated as “nature of mind,” “essence of mind,” or “Base awareness,” designates the awareness that is the Base of all experiences of *samsara* and *nirvana*, and the term rigpa (*rig-pa*) designates this very same awareness when it becomes perfectly evident in *nirvana*. Therefore, rigpa is no other than Base awareness, but it is *often* so called *only* when it becomes fully

evident in Awakening-*qua*-Path (the manifestation of rigpa while on the Path) or in Awakening-*qua*-Fruit (the definitive manifestation or rigpa as the Fruit)—which suggests that the best name for it may be “Awake awareness.”

I decided to translate the words *vidya* and rigpa as “Presence” because Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu uses the term “presence” to refer to nondistractedness. Not to be distracted from whatever one is doing in the dualistic, relative state, but to be perfectly mindful and aware of it, is the relative presence that is referred to by the Tibetan term *tenpa* (*dran-pa*; Skt., *smṛiti*; Pali, *sattipatana*). Not to be distracted from the nondual, delusion-free state in which the nondual primordial gnosis that is the Base is fully patent, is the absolute Presence that is referred to by the Tibetan term rigpa (*rig-pa*). Therefore, to be distracted from what one is doing at a certain moment in the dualistic, relative state is distraction *both* with regard to *tenpa* or relative presence, and with regard to rigpa or absolute Presence. In their turn, both relative distraction and relative presence or *tenpa* must be acknowledged to be distraction with regard to the absolute Presence called rigpa, for both conditions involve the concealment of the nondual primordial gnosis that is the Base, and therefore both are distraction with regard to the patency of this primordial gnosis.

I decided to translate the words *vidya* and rigpa as “Truth” whenever this seemed fit because, as seen in the main text, this word makes it possible to maintain to a certain degree the etymological meaning of the contrast that the teachings make between *vidya* and *avidya* (and between the Tibetan equivalents of these, rigpa [*rig-pa*] and marigpa [*ma-rig-pa*]): as pointed out in a previous note, *avidya* and marigpa are compound terms consisting of (1) a privative prefix (the Sanskrit *a* and the Tibetan *ma*) and (2) the words *vidya* and rigpa, which in the context of Dzogchen teaching refer to the state in which the true condition of the individual and the universe becomes evident. The state designated by the words *avidya* and marigpa is, therefore, the one in which *vidya* or rigpa is ignored (first sense of the terms *avidya* and marigpa in the threefold classification adopted here) and in which the manifestation of delusion (second and third senses of the terms *avidya* and marigpa in the threefold classification adopted here) produces illusory experiences that are erroneously considered to be true—i.e., the already mentioned state of “non-Truth.” So it follows that *vidya* and rigpa indicate the state of “Truth” in the sense of “absence of the delusion called *avidya* or marigpa.”

³⁵⁸ Dzogchen texts and teachings often speak of recognizing thoughts as the *dharmakaya*; or of recognizing the true condition, essence or nature of thoughts, and so on. In all such cases, what the texts are referring to is *not* what normally we understand for “recognition,” which is the understanding of a pattern (Skt., *lakṣhaṇa*; Tib., *tseṅpe* [*mtshan-dpe*]) in terms of a delusorily valued concept. It was in order to make clear the distinction between that which the texts refer to, and what is usually termed “recognition,” that I coined the neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize,” and so on.

For some time I used the terms “reCognition,” “reCognize” and so on, written with a capital C so that they could be distinguished from the terms “recognition,” “recognize” and so on. However, this was far from ideal, insofar as “reCognition” (etc.) still contained the prefix “co,” which implies the *co*-emergent arising of a subject and an object, which does *not at all* take place in what I am calling reGnition (etc.). (As we have seen over and over again, the dualistic knowledge [*connaissance*] that is a function of the state of delusion involves the co-emergence [*co-naissance*] of subject and object, which is why Paul Claudel asserted that, “*la connaissance est la co-naissance du sujet et de l’objet*.” Contrariwise, in what I call “reGnition” the subject-object duality dissolves like feathers entering fire.)

The neologisms “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on are far from perfect, for the prefix “re” may convey the wrong idea that a new event called “Gnition” takes place each and every time that which I am calling “reGnition” manifests (just as, each and every time there is recognition, a new cognition takes place)—when in fact what takes place whenever there (is) reGnition (is) the unveiling of the primordial Gnosis that is the true nature of thought and in general of all mental phenomena, and which neither arises nor disappears. However, since all alternatives I considered were far more inadequate, I decided to use “reGnition,” “reGnize” and so on. (These terms may be translated into Spanish as “reGnoscimiento,” “reGnoscer” and so on, and into other Latin languages by the corresponding constructions.)

³⁵⁹ Therefore, as Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has remarked and as will be shown in Part Two of this book, it is a crass error to assert that “Not to remain in doubt” consists in “deciding upon this single point:” *deciding* that the nature of reality is that which unveiled in the state of tawa or Direct introduction is an activity of mind *qua* nucleus of delusion, and so if we make a decision in this regard the core of delusion will be sustained rather than transcended. Not to remain in doubt means that the certitude attained in the state of

rigpa beyond mind has filtered into the state of mind, so that the latter does not have to decide but has a spontaneous, absolute certitude concerning the true nature of reality.

³⁶⁰ In other words, the chöpa (*spyod-pa*) or Behavior of Dzogchen does not imply to “be having oneself” (which is how at some point Alan Watts spelled “behaving oneself”), which would be a function of dualism and of the directionality of mind, but corresponds to the spontaneous flow of the nondual state of rigpa. (However, as will be shown below in the regular text, the eventual manifestations of delusion are also part of the chöpa or Behavior of Dzogchen.)

³⁶¹ In fact, in order to integrate all experiences of daily life into the state of Contemplation first we must have a state of Contemplation into which they may be integrated—which can only be developed if we practice Contemplation in sessions or thuns (*thun*) and, ideally, spend a period in strict retreat.

³⁶² The condition for this to work is that we have a sense of shame and restraint (Tib., *ngotsa threl yö* [*ngo tsha khrel yod*]) of the type emphasized by the teachings of the *Sutrayana*—which implies that we have a wholesome integrity and that we have a profound respect for the sensitivity of others—and also that we have a genuine understanding of the meaning of *samaya*.

The above may seem strange insofar Dzogchen must free us from shame, making us become like Milarepa, who stated, “this Path of Milarepa is such that one is not ashamed of oneself.” However, for the Path of *Ati* to lead an individual to this result, initially this individual must have a sense of shame: in order to go beyond shame one must rely on the propensity for shame to manifest, and in particular one must have the right type of shame before the right type of actions. In turn, this sense of shame depends on the degree to which we are committed to the Path—which in turn depends on the extent to which we do not remain in doubt but, contrariwise, we have developed the faith that derives from realization.

³⁶³ As stated in a previous note, the primordial gnosis called yeshe (*ye-shes*) is the common Base of both *samsara* and *nirvana*.

In *samsara*, this nondual gnosis is veiled by the manifestation of the illusory subject-object duality; therefore, the ensuing delusion impedes spontaneous liberation, and the awareness designated by the Tibetan term she (*shes*) manifests as the eight dualistic consciousnesses: (1) consciousness of the all-ground or kunzhi namshe (*kun-gzhi rnam-shes*), (2) defilement-consciousness or nyongmongpachen yikyi namshe (*nyong-mongs-pa-can yid-kyi rnam-shes*), (3) consciousness of thoughts and mental contents, and (4 to 8) the consciousnesses of the five senses widely acknowledged by Western Philosophy, Psychology and common sense.

In *nirvana*, this nondual gnosis is not veiled, and thus, since its all-liberating quality is not impeded, it manifests as chikshe kundröl (*gcik-shes kun-grol*) or “all-liberating single gnosis.”

Therefore, it is utterly wrong to understand the example of the mirror to mean that in *samsara* our awareness is also like a mirror in which reflections leave no traces. In fact, in *samsara* our clinging to appearances through acceptance, rejection or indifference (and their various subclasses, which are the five, six, and so on up to eighty-four-thousand passions) establishes karmic traces that reaffirm and sustain *samsara*, and so it would be utterly wrong to speak of spontaneous liberation in this regard.

³⁶⁴ The practices that may be said to correspond to *shamatha* and *vipashyana* are applied successively in the Kham (*Khams*) tradition of the Semde, which posit four yogas (*rnal-'byor bzhi*) or samadhis (*ting-'dzin bzhi*). There are traditions that do not specify such a clear, sequential order of practices.

On the basis of some statements by Bönpo Masters, some have suggested that the near correspondence of practices of the Semde with *Mahayana* practices of *shamatha* and *vipashyana* is due to the fact that the practices of *shamatha* or calm abiding and *vipashyana* or insight pertaining to the *Mahayana* (as different from those belonging to the *Hinayana*) were in fact derived from the Semde series of Dzogchen—which they relate to the fact that the *Atiyoga* was referred to in the *Samten Migdrön* as the “universal ancestor of all vehicles.” However, in order to posit a theory as revolutionary and contrary to Buddhist tradition as this it would be necessary to validate it by means of concrete evidence, which is nonexistent as yet.

Others have suggested that the sudden *Mahayana* (in which *shamatha* and *vipashyana* are not supposed to manifest sequentially, but simultaneously) derived from the Semde. However, there are striking differences between the sudden *Mahayana* and the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings; in this regard, cf. (1) Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished; (2) Part Two of this book.

³⁶⁵ This is merely a generalization. For example, it is a fact that the semdzins (*sems-'dzin*) of the Semde (*sems-sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings require practitioners to act directly on the organism’s energetic systems by means that loosely correspond to those used in Tantrism.

³⁶⁶ Originally, the whole of the teachings of *Ati* were referred to as *Upadesha*, Menngag or “Oral instruction.” However, nowadays the terms *Upadesha* and Menngag are automatically taken to refer to the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde series established by Mañjushrimitra.

³⁶⁷ Some translators have rendered the term “Thögel” (*thod-rgal*) as “taking the leap,” which is incorrect insofar as it mistakenly suggests that it involves an action (like that of leaping) on the part of the illusory mental subject. Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has remarked that a more precise translation of the term would be “as soon as you are here, you are there.” However, such a long title would be encumbering if found again and again in a text, and so I opted for a term that I seem to remember Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu used at some point, and that expresses most correctly the essence of Thögel, which is “acceleration” insofar as the practice catalyzes the process of spontaneous liberation of Tekchö (*khregs-chod*), making it much swifter.

³⁶⁸ This example, which Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu used in the teachings he gave in the retreat that took place in Lhundrubgar, Venezuela, from November 28 to December 2, 1996, refers to the first of the three modes or capacities of spontaneous liberation that will be dealt with in some detail in Part Two of this book, but does not apply precisely to the other ones.

However, no matter what capacity or mode of spontaneous liberation manifests, or what kind of thoughts the practitioner is dealing with (coarse [among which most significant are the discursive ones], subtle [i.e. intuitive], or super-subtle), in all cases spontaneous liberation will do away with the thoughts that were veiling the Base—and in particular with the supersubtle thought that the subject-object duality is. In fact, this is why it is said that, upon reGnition (of) the phenomena of dang energy as the *dharmakaya*, subject and object dissolve like feathers entering fire—which is why tensions instantly break in the first mode of spontaneous liberation. (It must be noted, however, that in the practices of Tekchö and the Nyingthik [*snying-thig*] one deals mainly with coarse thoughts of the discursive kind, and that it is in the practices of Thögel and the Yangthik [*yang-thig*] that the yogi deals mainly with supersubtle thoughts.)

³⁶⁹ In the long run, calm abiding may allow the individual to transcend all conceptuality in the state known as kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) or the base-of-all, in which relaxation may be absolute. However, this state is neither Awakening nor liberation, but a condition in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are active, and therefore abiding in it cannot be useful on the Path. Contrariwise, the Dzogchen teachings compare abiding in this nonconceptual state in which there are no thoughts with “cutting one’s own head,” for so long as one remains in it one’s possibilities of proceeding on the Path will be blocked.

³⁷⁰ What is progressively neutralized by the repeated spontaneous liberation of delusion is the power of delusory valuation to sustain concepts rather than the manifestation of concepts themselves. However, when concepts manifest but there is absolutely no delusory valuation they can no longer be called concepts. At any rate, the final realization of Dzogchen while the body is still alive is the manifestation of concepts beyond any delusory valuation whatsoever; therefore the individual automatically makes the distinctions that are necessary for life, but does so without experiencing fire as fire, water as water, the floor as floor, shoes as shoes, and so on.

³⁷¹ In Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished, we are told that when we see someone coming toward us, or when a plane first becomes visible over the horizon, the first thing we see is a thigle, which is the potentiality for these things to appear later on as a person or a plane, respectively. Likewise, subatomic particles are thigles. For a longer and more thorough discussion of the term thigle see Part Two of this book.

³⁷² Another alternative translation of Yangthik would be “kernel of the innermost potentiality.”

³⁷³ For a more extensive and in-depth explanation of Phowa Chenpo, see Part Two of this book.

³⁷⁴ As noted in the discussion of the Path, in it the practitioner successively deals with the three forms of manifestation of the energy or thukje aspect of the Base; therefore, with regard to these three aspects there is also a continuity, which results in no longer experiencing them as discontinuous—i.e., in no longer experiencing them as being separate and independent from each other.

³⁷⁵ Let us take as an example the *Atiyoga* method for direct Introduction through pronunciation of the syllable PHAT! Immediately after the Master explosively pronounces this mantric syllable, fortunate disciples *might* have an experience of the dimension of the base-of-all or kunzhi (*kun-gzhi*) in the nyam (*nyams*) called heddewa (*had-de-ba*), in which there is a possibility of nonconceptually experiencing the *dharmadhatu*. Then at some point what is known as ngowo shi (*ngo bo’i gshis*) might shine forth;* if this makes the face of spontaneous awareness (*swasamvedana* or rangrig) clearly patent (rangngo shepa [*rang-ngo shes-pa*]), with the emphasis on the essence or ngowo aspect of this awareness, so that there is a

nondual, nonconceptual reGnition of the Awake, nondual self-awareness called *rang-rig*, this is the unveiling of the true nature of the Base as the *dharmakaya* and the manifestation of the famous *chikshe kundröl* (*gcik-shes kun-grol*) or “all-liberating single gnosis:” in this nondual gnosis, which is not veiled by the unawareness that is the first sense of *avidya* or *marigpa* in the threefold classification adopted here and in which there is **no** (illusory) distance between a perceiver and something perceived (for also the second sense of *avidya* or *marigpa* in the threefold classification adopted here is not manifest), the spurious perceiver’s clinging to the perceived that throughout *samsara* inhibits spontaneous liberation cannot enter into play, and in fact all that arises liberates upon arising. At any rate, it will be perfectly evident that *rang-rig* (which also may be called *rangjunggi yeshe* [*rang-byung-gi ye-shes*] or “self-arisen primordial gnosis”) has manifested in a totally spontaneously (*rang*) way (which, as stated in a previous note, is not at all the case in the *Anuyoga*—or, even less so, in any of the lower vehicles).

While the *nyam* called *heddewa* is manifest, we are not asleep or unconscious; contrariwise, we can notice that there is a most clear awareness. A *precise* application of the secret oral instructions may facilitate the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition of this awareness: *in terms of these instructions*, we look and check to what or whom is the *heddewa* present—or in what awareness, just like a reflection in a mirror, is this *nyam* manifest. Since the illusory mental *subject* can perceive *objects* only, and by no means can perceive itself, the precise way of looking explained in the instructions may provide a most precious opportunity for the subject-object duality that is the core of the delusion that is the second of the senses the term *avidya* or *marigpa* has in the threefold classification adopted here, to short-circuit and collapse in what the Dzogchen teachings call *ru-log* (*ru-log*) or “reverting [*samsara*].” *Samsara* is reverted because that very moment the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition that makes Awake nondual self-awareness’ face patent manifests; however, nor could we fall once more into the condition of the base-of-all or *kunzhi* (*kun-gzhi*) proper to *heddewa*, for by the same token the unawareness that is the first sense *avidya* or *marigpa* has in the threefold classification adopted here instantly dissolves, and thus this self-awareness manifests, functioning as *chikshe kundröl* or “all-liberating single gnosis.” If this happens, it will be self-evident that it occurred *spontaneously*: that it was **not** produced by our action, and that it *cannot* be produced by any means whatsoever. (Furthermore, in occasions in which the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness is high enough and certain specific conditions are present, this reGnition may take place after a positive feedback loop has led tensions to a threshold, and result in those tensions’ spontaneous liberation [i.e., in their liberation of their own accord, in a perfectly spontaneous way]: in this case it will be even more clear that this reGnition and the concomitant spontaneous liberation of delusion do not at all depend on our actions or on our will.)

If there is no reGnition (of) Awake awareness, or if after its reGnition *avidya* or *marigpa* arises again in the first of the senses it has in the threefold classification adopted here and so the dimension of the base-of-all manifests anew, the process discussed in the following note will take place.

Note that the particle *she* (*shes*) is part both of the terms *rangjunggi yeshe* and *chikshe kundröl*, on the one hand, and of terms such as *kunzhi namshe* (or *kunzhi nampar shepa*), *yikyi namshe* (or *yikyi nampar shepa*), and *gongai namshe* (or *gongai nampar shepa*), on the other. This is so because all of these terms refer to functions of primordial gnosis or *yeshe* (*ye-shes*): in the *rangjunggi yeshe* called *chikshe kundröl* this nondual gnosis is fully evident, and the nonmanifestation of the illusion of duality that is the core of the delusion that is the second of the senses of the term *avidya* or *marigpa* in the threefold classification adopted here, together with the nonmanifestation of the unawareness that is the first of the senses of the term *avidya* or *marigpa* in the threefold classification adopted here, translates itself into the instant spontaneous liberation of whatever arises; in the *namshes* that characterize *samsara*, the base of experience continues to be primordial gnosis or *yeshe*, but this gnosis is veiled by the unawareness that is the first of the senses of the term *avidya* or *marigpa* in the threefold classification adopted here and by the illusion of duality that is the core of the delusion that is the second of the senses of the term *avidya* or *marigpa* in the threefold classification adopted here—which, as we have seen, prevents spontaneous liberation.

To conclude, it must be noted that though the terms the Dzogchen teachings use in this description are either identical or very similar to those used in Mahayana texts of the Third Promulgation such as the *Lankavatarasutra*, in philosophical schools such as the *Yogachara* and the *Madhyamaka-Swatantrika-Yogachara* and so on, the Dzogchen teachings do not give these terms exactly the same sense they have in

the Mahayana. In particular, none of the teachings of the Mahayana features the concept of *alaya* or *kunzhi* (*kun-gzhi*) alone. Moreover, what the Dzogchen teachings refer to as “consciousness of the base-of-all” (Skt., *alayavijñāna*; Tib., *kunzhi namshe* [*kun-gzhi rnam-shes*] or *kunzhi nampar shepa* [*kun-gzhi rnam-par shes-pa*]) is not at all the same as the so-called “receptacle consciousness” of the Third *Dharmachakra*, the *Yogachara* school and so on.

* Ngowo shi (*ngo bo'i gshis*) is the term used to refer to this in a short terma revealed by Jigme Lingpa called *rDzogs-pa chen-po'i gnad-gsum shan-'byed*, which forms part of the *kLong-chen snying-gi thig-le*, and that was translated in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, pp. 142-147. Dr Guenther remarks that in Kagyüpa terminology the meaning of shi (*gshis*) is loosely the same as that of the term ngowo (*ngo-bo*) in the teachings of the Nyingmapa (Guenther, Herbert, 1977, p. 144, note 11; for an explanation of the essence or ngowo aspect of the Base see the regular text of the chapter on the Path of spontaneous liberation in this volume, or the discussion of the three aspects of the Base in Part Two of this book). However, as witnessed in the brief *Tantra* revealed by Jigme Lingpa, in the Dzogchen teachings the combination “ngowo shi” is used when the ngowo aspect of the Base shines forth, as occurs in the initial levels of the manifestation of spontaneous awareness that makes the Base evident. (A more detailed explanation of the combined term “ngowo shi” is provided in Part Two of this book, and also in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.)

³⁷⁶ How do the above three conditions interact? The **neutral condition of the base-of-all** listed as (2), in which there is a nonconceptual experience of the limitless space where all phenomena appear (Skt., *dharmadhatu*; Tib., *chöjing* [*chos dbyings*]), cannot manifest uninterruptedly: at some point it will be interrupted by the sudden shining forth of ngowo shi [*Ngo bo'i gshis*], which should make spontaneous awareness (Skt., *swasamvedana*; Tib., *rang rig*—which is the same as *rangjunggi yeshe* [*rang-byung-gi ye-shes*] or “self-arisen primordial gnosis”) most clearly patent, with the emphasis on its essence or ngowo aspect. However, what the Dzogchen teachings call spontaneous awareness is not the same as its namesake in the Yogachara School (Skt., *swasamvittih*; Tib., *rang rig*), for it is not explained in terms of a duplication of consciousness: it does not involve positing a supposedly “second consciousness” which is turned to the inside while a sensory consciousness that is oriented toward the “external world” apprehends a sensory object, and which simultaneously experiences its own nature without distinguishing or separating the experienced from the experiencing consciousness. The concept of spontaneous awareness in the Dzogchen teachings will be discussed in great detail in the next chapter of this book; for the time being, suffice to say that it is a nondual Awake awareness beyond the subject-object duality that becomes patent in *nirvana* (so that we then may speak of spontaneous awareness *qua* Path or *qua* Fruit, according to the case), and which in *samsara* is inherent in the Base, though it is ignored by dualistic consciousness. At any rate, as noted in Capriles, Elías, 2003, and as we will see again in the comparison of Mahamadhyamaka and Dzogchen in the chapter on the Madhyamaka School, in the Tibetan term that expresses this concept, which is *rangrig*, the particle *rang* refers to a spontaneous occurrence, and thus it perfectly responds to the way spontaneous awareness manifests in Ati Dzogpa Chenpo, but has little relation to what the term refers to in the Yogachara School (and the same may be said concerning the particle “swa” in the Sanskrit term *swasamvedana*).

If, upon the sudden shining forth of ngowo shi, we do not react with an attempt to take as object the essence or ngowo aspect of this awareness and recognize it in terms of concepts, but instead a nondual, nonconceptual reGnition makes patent *rigpa's* own face (*rangngo shepa* [*rang-ngo shes-pa*]), **this is rigpa-qua-Path manifesting as the dharmakaya: an unveiling of the true nature of spontaneous awareness**, with the emphasis on its ngowo aspect, which is the first level of realization in Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, and which is also the initial manifestation of the renowned *chikshe kundröl* [*gcik-shes kun-grol*] or “all-liberating single gnosis” in the condition of (1) *nirvana*, upon which thoughts liberate themselves spontaneously. This gnosis is all-liberating because when it unveils there manifests *no* (illusory) distance between a perceiver and something perceived, and therefore the spurious perceiver's clinging to the perceived that throughout *samsara* inhibits spontaneous liberation cannot occur, and as a result all that arises liberates upon arising. However, the all-liberating function of this gnosis is inhibited not only in *samsara*, but also in the condition of the base-of-all in which neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* are manifest: though in the condition of the base-of-all *samsara* (and therefore the spurious perceiver's clinging of the to the perceived) is not manifest, this gnosis has not unveiled; contrariwise, its all-liberating character has been inhibited by the obscuration of this very gnosis by the contingent, beclouding element of stupefaction that was referred to

above. (In fact, just before Awakening Shakyamuni was resting in the meditative absorption of the base-of-all; his Awakening is said to have taken place when, upon seeing the morning star, the reGnition of Awake awareness manifested in his continuum, giving rise to *nirvana*.)

How to help the manifestation of the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition that makes patent rigpa's own face, so that rigpa-qua-Path may manifest as the dharmakaya? While the neutral condition of the base-of-all is manifest, we are neither asleep nor in a state of total unawareness like that of a stone; contrariwise, there is a most clear awareness. A *precise* application of the secret oral instructions may contribute to the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition of this awareness: *in terms of these instructions*, we must look and check to what or whom is this condition present—or in what awareness, just like a reflection in a mirror, is it manifest. Since the illusory mental *subject* can perceive *objects* only, and by no means can perceive itself, the precise way of looking explained in the instructions may provide a most precious opportunity for the subject-object duality that is the core of the delusion that is the second of the senses the term *avidya* or marigpa has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, to short-circuit and collapse. In that very instant the nondual, nonconceptual reGnition that makes Awake nondual self-awareness' face patent manifests, dissolving the beclouding of primordial awareness that is the first sense *avidya* or marigpa has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, and thus allowing this self-awareness to manifest and function as chikshe kundröl or “all-liberating single gnosis.” When this happens, it becomes self-evident that it occurred *spontaneously* rather than having been *produced* by our action, and we become fully aware that it *cannot* be *produced* by any means whatsoever. (In occasions in which the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness [Skt. *kundalini*; Tib. *thig le*] is high enough and certain specific conditions are present, this reGnition may take place after a positive feedback loop has led tensions to a threshold, and then, in connection with the application of the instructions but not as an effect of this, those tensions liberate themselves spontaneously [i.e., liberate of their own accord, in a perfectly spontaneous way]: in this case it will be even more clear that this reGnition and the concomitant spontaneous liberation of delusion do not at all depend on our actions or on our will.)

However, the sudden shining forth of ngowo shi may also induce the contingent arising of a beclouding element of stupefaction (Tib. Mongcha [*rmongs cha*]) that prevents the reGnition of the shining forth of the so-called fivefold gnosis that otherwise would have made patent the condition in question; this would amount to the occurrence of the first type of *avidya* or marigpa to manifest in the process that produces *samsara*, which the Dzogchen threefold classification of *avidya* favored by Longchen Rabjampa—alternative to the one adopted in this book—calls gyu dagnyi chikpai marigpa (*rgyu bdag nyid gcig pa'i ma rig pa*. Cfr. Longchenpa [1976, p. 24] and the great encompassing work by Cornu [2001, p. 62]), and hence to the manifestation of the neutral base-of-all. If, immediately after failing to reGnize the shining forth in question (which would have allowed us to realize it to be the expression of the Base), we incur in the error of taking it to be an external reality, so that there arises the subject-object duality, this is the second type of *avidya* to arise according to the alternative threefold classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa, which calls it spontaneous illusion or lhenchik kyepai marigpa (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*. Cfr. Longchenpa [1975a, p. 51; 1976, pp. 24 and 122 note 10] and Cornu [2001, p. 62])—which marks the beginning of the development of *samsara*. This gives rise to the illusory distance between the perceiver and the perceived necessary for the perceiver to cling to the perceived, and hence for the grasper and the grasped—condition of possibility of grasping at appearances—to arise. In fact, at this point there manifests a delusiveness (Tib., nyönyi [*nyon-yid*]), the propensity for which is inherent in the base-of-all-carrying-propensities (bagchagkyi kunzhi [*bag-chags-kyi kun-gzhi*]), which upon manifesting conceives of the base-of-all-carrying-propensities as an independently existing “I” that rules over the skandhas, thus giving rise to the basic disturbing attitude referred to by the Sanskrit term *ahamkara* and the Tibetan ngadzin (*nga 'dzin*) that I am rendering as self-grasping (but that as we have seen involves self-affirmation and self-preoccupation), which conceives an *I* or *me* as the experiencer, would-be controller and somehow owner of what is cognized. This will give rise to the third type of *avidya* in the alternative threefold classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa, which is termed kuntu tagpai marigpa (*kun tu brtags pa'i ma rig pa*. Cfr. Longchenpa [1976, pp. 24 and 123 note 11] and Cornu [2001, p. 62]) or imaginative delusion, and which as the term suggests is related to the third truth of Mahamadhyamaka. This type of *avidya* involves the singling out of objects (which depends on the existence of a divisive, hermetic focus of awareness) within

the continuum that appeared as object the moment spontaneous illusion (lhenchik kyepai marigpa) arose in the immediately preceding stage, and the perception of these objects in terms of delusorily valued-absolutized thoughts (thus comprising the confusion of the digital, fragmentary maps of thought with the analog, holistic territory of the given that such maps are incapable of matching, and the mistaken belief in the perfect correspondence of the one and the other)—which produces the illusion of there being a plethora of entities existing inherently, independently and disconnectedly. Since the idea of an “I” has been superimposed on the illusory subject associated to dualistic consciousness, a compelling drive arises to confirm its existence and gratify its acquisitiveness by means of contacts with the seemingly self-existing, seemingly external entities that are perceived at this stage. With this, *samsara* consolidates. However, also in case *nirvana* manifested upon the reGnition (of) Awake Awareness, this would not last forever: at some point (and initially most likely after very few seconds) *avidya* or marigpa in the first of the senses it has in the Dzogchen classification adopted here would manifest again, reinstating the dimension of the base-of-all, from which *samsara* would rapidly develop.

The clinging of the grasper with regard to the grasped reinforces the inhibition of spontaneous liberation that, as a result of the arising of the first of the senses *avidya* and marigpa have in the Dzogchen classification adopted here, and in the one the Longchen Rabjampa espoused as well, was already manifest in the condition of the base-of-all—and it makes the complete development of *samsara* possible insofar as the whole of *samsara* functions in terms of the subject-object duality. In fact, in terms of the above illustration of the chikshe kundröl (*gcig shes kun grol*) or *all-liberating single gnosis* by the example of a spring, in *samsara* there is a perceiver that seems to lie at a distance from the water, and the spring flows like a river in which this perceiver can single out relatively lasting forms, conceptualize them, and cling to them, thereby fixating them and thus preventing their spontaneous liberation.

If we wish to explain the arising of *samsara* in more precise terms, we may do so in terms of three stages that successively produce birth in the three spheres of *samsara* (as implied by the terma revealed by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu titled *kLong chen 'od gsal mkha' 'gro'i snying thig las lta ba blo 'das chen po'i gnad byang bshigs*); if at any of these stages we let go of the drive to grasp potential objects, the development of *samsara* will be interrupted, but otherwise the corresponding samsaric realm will become established. If at any of these stages we let go of the drives that give rise to delusion, the development of *samsara* will be interrupted, but otherwise the corresponding samsaric sphere will become established. These three stages are:

- (1) The co-emergent arising of the activity I call “delusory valuation-absolutization” and the supersubtle thought I call threefold thought-structure begets the initial stirring of self-grasping, immediately producing a directional, dualistic structuring and functioning of the cognitive complex (which polarizes into subject and object) and by the same token giving rise to the phenomenon of being—thus generating the illusion that there is an *experience-that-is*, an *experiencer-that-is* and *something-experienced-that-is*. Thus there is an attempt to grasp as object the continuum of the neutral base-of-all that manifested when the beclouding element of stupefaction prevented the reGnition of ngowo shi (*ngo bo'i gshis*) that otherwise would have made evident the essence or ngowo aspect of the Base (i.e. the Base’s voidness that constitutes the dharmakaya-*qua*-Base), which causes the continuum of the base-of-all to be replaced by a limited yet seemingly limitless object that is neither the shining forth of ngowo shi nor the condition of the base-of-all, but which, being beyond a figure / ground distinction, may be mistaken for a totality or an infinitude (which it is not, insofar as the illusory subject-object duality has concealed Totality, and the experience of there being a subject different and separate from whatever appears as object has introduced a limit that makes the object finite)—so that by establishing **a link-of-being (EXPLAIN?)** with it we gain the illusion of having attained a totality or an infinitude (In Capriles [electronic publication 2004] a longer explanation of the arising of *samsara* from the base-of-all is provided, and relevant Tibetan sources are given). If we manage to make this condition stable, we take birth in the formless realm; otherwise, *samsara* will continue to develop through the manifestation of the following stages.
- (2) Then there manifests what the Dzogchen teachings call consciousness of the base-of-all (Skt., *alaya vijñāna*; Tib., kunzhi namshe [*kun-gzhi nām-shes*] or kunzhi nampar shepa [*kun-gzhi nām-par shes-pa*]). Though at this point the concrete objects of the five senses are not yet present as such, a subtle cognitive capacity that tends to grasp its objects has risen and made itself ready in every respect to receive the

impressions of the potential objects of deluded mind, like a mirror, and so the eyes see color-forms, the ears hear sounds, the nose smells fragrances, the tongue tastes flavors and the body has kinesthetic sensations. This involves a proto-conceptual interest that drives us to single out and take as figure some of those structures that conserve their pattern within the total change of the sensory pseudo-totally appearing as object (i.e., the collections of characteristics referred to by the Sanskrit term *lakshana* and the Tibetan noun *tsenpai* [*mtshan-dpe*]). This consciousness is compared to ice on water (Jigme Lingpa, *rdzogs-pa chen-po'i gnag gsum shan-'byed*, in the *klong-chen snying-gi thig-le*. Quoted in Guenther, Herbert, 1977, p. 144) because grasping at its would-be objects amounts to singling them out, which is akin to freezing segments of the ocean, insofar as it causes what is as yet unpatterned become configured; when this happens we enter the realm that, in Mahayana terms, is primarily determined by the defilement of knowledge (Skt., *jñeyavarana*; Tib., *shedrib* [*shes-sgrib*]): the realm of form. If we manage to make the ensuing condition stable, we take birth in this realm; otherwise, *samsara* will continue to develop through the manifestation of the next stage.

- (3) Thereafter the ego-centered consciousness that the Dzogchen teachings refer to as the consciousness of the passions (Skt., *klišhtamanovijñāna*; Tib., *nyongmongpachen yikyi namshe* [*nyong-mongs-pa-can yid-kyi rnam-shes*], or *nyongmongpachen yikyi nampar shepa* [*nyong-mongs-pa-can yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*])—consisting in the drive to react to the above structures or collections of characteristics, grasping them, appropriating them, or confronting them in whichever specific ways may serve the illusory I that is the core of self-preoccupation to establish, confirm, demonstrate and sustain the illusion of its own existence as a separate, absolutely important and true individual self—may lead one into the realm of sensuality, which functions through the subsequent modes of consciousnesses described in the Dzogchen teachings: the consciousness that apprehends mental phenomena (Skt., *manovijñāna*; Tib., *yikyi namshe* [*yid-kyi rnam-shes*], or *yikyi nampar shepa* [*yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*]), which apprehends the phenomena of the *dang* (*gdangs*) mode of manifestation of energy that we call “mental,” and the so-called consciousnesses of the [other] five senses (Skt., *pañchadwarajñāna*; Tib., *gongai namshe* [*sgo-lnga'i rnam-shes*], or *gongai nampar shepa* [*sgo-lnga'i rnam-par shes-pa*]), which are the five *modes* of consciousness that apprehend what the Dzogchen teachings call *tsel* (*rtsal*) energy, which manifests as the fields of the five senses universally admitted by Western psychology and epistemology, and which depend on the consciousness that apprehends mental phenomena for the recognition and perception in terms of thoughts of the collections of characteristics that, in these five fields, are singled out and taken as figure (all of these “consciousnesses” and their objects, are produced, so to say, by the “Base-of-all carrying propensities,” for consciousness and its contents arise interdependently or coemergently for one moment and then disappear, in an order or sequence that depends on the karmic propensities “carried” by the “base-of-all carrying propensities”). This is the realm of “I” and “mine,” for through the last six modes of consciousness, the imaginary “I” that is the core of the self-preoccupation tries to gratify its acquisitiveness by obtaining concrete sensory experiences and emotionally reacting to the objects of these experiences. In Mahayana terms, it is also the realm that is primarily determined by the defilement of the passions (Skt., *kleshavarana*; Tib., *nyöndrib*).

Nonetheless, in the case of Dzogchen practitioners who are familiar enough with the unwavering manifestation of the dharmakaya and the spontaneous liberation of delusory thoughts, even at this point it will be enough for them to look into whatever thought is present, as though to apprehend its true condition (with which they are quite familiar due to their previous, repeated experience of spontaneous liberation), for the thought to liberate itself spontaneously in the unveiling of the dharmakaya—or not to do so, since spontaneous liberation is beyond causality and thus, unless the individual is extremely advanced on the Dzogchen Path, there are no guarantees that it will take place in any particular occasion.

- (A process roughly analogous to the one described above develops again and again as short cognitive gaps occur repeatedly in our experience throughout the activities of daily life, but at the time our space-time-awareness is quite narrow and we are distracted by the turmoil of daily activities, duties and worries; furthermore, the process takes place just too rapidly and confusedly, and the limits of its successive stages become extremely murky. At any rate, the recurrence of this process throughout our daily life shows that *samsara*, rather than being continuous, is constantly arising and developing.)

³⁷⁷ These wisdoms, which are illustrated by the simile of a mirror, were explained in Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished; they will also be explained in Part Two of this book.

³⁷⁸ It is important to note that in each of these levels of realization all three kayas are realized. For example, the first level of realization is the realization of the dharmakaya because it is the realization of the true condition of the dang (*gdangs*) form of manifestation of energy, which is the dharmakaya and which illustrates the essence or ngowo (*ngo bo*) aspect of the Base or zhi (*gzhi*), which from another standpoint (which, however, is also adopted by the Dzogchen teachings), insofar as it is the voidness aspect of the Base, is also identified with the dharmakaya. However, in this level we realize the emptiness of dang energy simultaneously with its clarity and with its unceasing manifestation, and therefore in the sense in which realization of the Base's emptiness (its essence or ngowo aspect) is realization of the dharmakaya, realization of the Base's clarity (its nature or rangzhin aspect) is realization of the sambhogakaya, and realization of the Base's unceasing manifestation (its energy or thukje aspect) is the nirmanakaya, the realization of the three kayas is complete in the realization of the true condition of dang energy that, in the special sense proper to the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde (*man nagag sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings being considered, is the dharmakaya.

Likewise, the second level of realization is the realization of the sambhogakaya because it is the realization of the true condition of the rölpa (*rol pa*) form of manifestation of energy, which is the sambhogakaya, and which illustrates the nature or rangzhin (*rang bzhin*) aspect of the Base or zhi (*gzhi*), which from another standpoint (which, however, is also adopted by the Dzogchen teachings), insofar as it is the clarity aspect of the Base is also identified with the sambhogakaya. However, in this level we realize the emptiness of rölpa energy simultaneously with its clarity and with its unceasing manifestation, and hence in the sense in which realization of the Base's emptiness (its essence or ngowo aspect) is realization of the dharmakaya, realization of the Base's clarity (its nature or rangzhin aspect) is realization of the sambhogakaya, and realization of the Base's unceasing manifestation (its energy or thukje aspect) is the nirmanakaya, the realization of the three kayas is complete in the realization of the true condition of rölpa energy that, in a special sense proper to the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde (*man nagag sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings being considered, is the sambhogakaya.

Similarly, the third level of realization is the realization of the nirmanakaya because it is the realization of the true condition of the tsel (*rtsal*) form of manifestation of energy, which is the nirmanakaya, and which illustrates the energy or thukje (*thugs rje*) aspect of the Base or zhi (*gzhi*), which from another standpoint (which, however, is also adopted by the Dzogchen teachings), insofar as it is the unceasing manifestation aspect of the Base, is also identified with the nirmanakaya. However, in this level we realize the emptiness of tsel energy simultaneously with its clarity and with its unceasing manifestation, complete in the realization of the true condition of tsel energy, and hence in the sense in which realization of the Base's emptiness (its essence or ngowo aspect) is realization of the dharmakaya, realization of the Base's clarity (its nature or rangzhin aspect) is realization of the sambhogakaya, and realization of the Base's unceasing manifestation (its energy or thukje aspect) is the nirmanakaya, the realization of the three kayas is complete in the realization of the true condition of tsel energy that, in a special sense proper to the *Upadeshavarga* or Menngagde (*man nagag sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings being considered, is the nirmanakaya.

Thus we could say that in a specific Dzogchen sense realization of the true condition of dang energy is the dharmakaya, but that this dharmakaya has a dharmakaya, a sambhogakaya and a nirmanakaya aspect in a sense that is not limited to the Dzogchen teachings. Likewise, we could say that in a specific Dzogchen sense realization of the true condition of rölpa energy is the sambhogakaya, but that this sambhogakaya has a dharmakaya, a sambhogakaya and a nirmanakaya aspect in a sense that is not limited to the Dzogchen teachings. And we could say that in a specific Dzogchen sense realization of the true condition of tsel energy is the nirmanakaya, but that this nirmanakaya has a dharmakaya, a sambhogakaya and a nirmanakaya aspect in a sense that is not limited to the Dzogchen teachings.

³⁷⁹ As will be shown in Part Two of this book, these special modes of putting an end to human existence are more unlikely to obtain in the case of practitioners who establish themselves as teachers and have many disciples, for the violations of the *samaya* or compromise by the disciples become an obstacle for the teacher's manifestation of these realizations. However, Masters who have the corresponding potential, even if they cannot manifest the special modes of putting an end to human existence that are exclusive to the *Atiyoga*, will manifest other signs that show that they have the corresponding potential and realization.

³⁸⁰ So far as I know, in the gradual *Mahayana* only the *Mahamadhyamaka* School acknowledges that the *rupakaya* is not the result of the accumulation of merits, and that the *dharmakaya* is not the result of the accumulation of wisdom. For an explanation of this, see Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.

³⁸¹ Furthermore, for the *rupakaya* to be the result of the accumulation of merits carried out in the post-Contemplation state or jethob, and for the *dharmakaya* to be the result of the accumulation of wisdom carried out in the Contemplation state or nyamzhak, the practice would have to comprise these two stages. However, in *Atiyoga* one has to go beyond the distinction between a state of Contemplation or nyamzhak in which the base is unveiled, and a state of post-Contemplation or jethob in which it is again hidden.

As noted in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004, the Dzogchen teachings do not particularly value samsaric states, even when they are of a kind in which delusion is less pronounced. In fact, these teachings are not concerned with a division into absolute and relative truth, or, regarding the latter, into correct and inverted relative truth, but with the basic division into: (1) *samsara*, (2) *nirvana*, and (3) the conditions wherein neither of these two functional possibilities is active. The contents of a post-Contemplation state being strictly samsaric, in Dzogchen they have to be reGnized the same way as any other samsaric state, so that they liberate themselves spontaneously and *nirvana* manifests: the point is to maintain uninterruptedly the state of Contemplation, from the standpoint of which it is not possible to go either forwards or backwards.

³⁸² In *Mahayogatantra*, the *mandala* of symbolic attributes is held to be the *rupakaya*; however, the *Mahayoga mandala* of symbolic attributes is not the *Atiyoga rupakaya*. In fact, as we have seen, what the vehicles of the Path of transformation regards as the three kayas are not so regarded by the *Atiyoga* Path of spontaneous liberation: in order to attain the *rupakaya* in the *Atiyoga* sense of the term, the *yogi* still will have to go through the bardo of the *dharmata* or chönyi bardo (*chos-nyid bar-do*) in practices such as Thögel (*thod-rgal*) or the Yangthik (*yang-thig*), in which thukje energy is projected into the external dimension or jing (*dbyings*), as corresponds to the tsel (*rtsal*) mode of manifestation, and thereafter the dynamic associated with the rölpa (*rol-pa*) mode of manifestation of energy unleashes a process of uninterrupted spontaneous liberation that results in the manifestation of the *rupakaya* in the *Atiyoga* sense of the term, and that leads the tsel and rölpa modes of manifestation of energy to fuse. (This is directly related to the different sequence of manifestation and the different meaning of the terms *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya* in the Tantras of the Path of Transformation and in the *Atiyoga* Path of spontaneous liberation, which was discussed above in the regular text of this section.)

³⁸³ In the Bön tradition, a symbol of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* seems to have been the mythological *khyung* bird, related to the family of eagles, from whose name, according to Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, the word *zhung* that appears in duplicate in the name *Zhang-zhung* probably derived (Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], E. Capriles, Ed., unpublished). This bird is none other than the Persian *simurgh*, called *kerkes* by the Turks, which is also part of Chinese mythology (if I remember correctly, the name of the bird in Mandarin is *k'i*), and which possibly may have corresponded to the Phoenix of Greek mythology.

Later, in Moslem times, Attar, the famous Persian Sufi poet, in his work *The Conference of the Birds*, symbolized the Sufi search for the “Master of the times” (i.e., the greatest teacher of a given period, possessing the teachings corresponding to his time) in terms of the search for the *simurgh* by different types of common birds—and, even though Attar was a Moslem, this extremely special bird was finally found... in non-Moslem China!

In Indian mythology, the king of the birds is the *garuda*, who serves as a mount for the god Vishnu and who feeds on serpents (which, as a result of his mother’s quarrel with Kadru, the mother of serpents, he is always intent on destroying) and on nagas (beings which are partly anthropomorphic, partly serpent-like). It is very likely that the origins of the Indian *garuda* be linked to those of the Tibetan *khyung* and their Persian and Chinese equivalents; whatever the case, as a result of the assimilation of Indian Buddhism, Tibetans fused their *khyung* bird with the *garuda*, giving rise to the kalding (*mkha’-lding*) or namkeding (*nam-mkha’i lding*), which occupies an important place in Tibetan Buddhist mythology and which, in Buddhist Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, symbolizes the manner in which the practitioner of Dzogchen obtains realization: the kalding is said to be born ready to fly, fully developed, and self-reliant.

It may be pointed out that the eggshell the *garuda* breaks upon hatching represents the conditionings that keeps us from apprehending reality as it truly is, and that limit our movements; once freed from this shell, nothing blocks our correct apprehension of reality and nothing obstructs our free flight.

³⁸⁴ At any rate, it is a fact that in the supreme vehicle development through the levels is swift and the characteristics of each successive *bhumi* do not manifest in a clear-cut sequence.

³⁸⁵ In the case of the sudden *Mahayana*, the direct source is not any of the three promulgations, but the “transmission of Mind” that, according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng*, Mahakashyapa received from Shakyamuni.

³⁸⁶ As we have seen, the *Hinayana* schools do not admit the validity of the *Mahayana*, and assert that the latter's teachings did not originate from Shakyamuni. However, the *Mahayana* and the rest of the higher vehicles as taught in Tibet assert that, after giving the teachings that constitute the *Hinayana* and that make up the first Promulgation, Shakyamuni taught two further series of teachings in the second and third Promulgations, which conform the basis of the *Mahayana*.

The Pali Canon, which conforms the doctrinal foundation of the *Hinayana* and which is based on the first Promulgation, was compiled before the Sanskrit Canon, doctrinal basis of the *Mahayana*, which is based on the second and third Promulgations. According to the *Mahayana*, the Buddha Shakyamuni preached some of the teachings of the Ample vehicle while living, entrusted others to the King of the nagas to be delivered later on to Nagarjuna, and so on. Therefore, the teachings of the *Mahayana* arose shortly after those of the *Hinayana* and, just like the latter, were taught directly by Shakyamuni—even though they were compiled at a later time.

In particular, we are told that, as outlined above, upon realizing that his immediate disciples were of the *shravaka* type, who would panic before the teachings on *shunyata* or voidness, Shakyamuni decided to give the sutras of the *Prajñāparamita* in custody to the King of the *naga* (elementals who live in the bottom of the waters and also under the earth, represented as having a human shape from the waist upwards and the shape of a snake from the waist downwards), who kept them as *termas* (*gter-ma*) or “hidden treasures” until the time of Nagarjuna (according to the majority of Western scholars, around the second century AD³⁸⁷ according to Tibetan tradition, from about 80 BC to circa 520 CE), who was the prophesized *tertön* who revealed them in the human world.

As explained already, the sudden or abrupt *Mahayana* is “a transmission beyond the scriptures” and as such is not based on any particular set of scriptures. However, as we have already seen, *Ch'an* or *Zen* prizes a set of canonical sources in which it sees clear references to the principles of the sudden *Mahayana* (such as various *Prajñāparamita* sutras, the *Lankavatara Sutra*, the *Vimalakirti Nirdesha Sutra* and so on and on). Furthermore, at any rate, according to *Ch'an* or *Zen*, its own “transmission beyond the scriptures” originates from the *nirmanakaya* Shakyamuni, who passed on this transmission to his disciple Mahakashyapa in the so-called “silent sermon.”

³⁸⁷ This is referred to in Tibetan as *dgongs pas thugs su brgyud*, which has been wrongly taken to imply a “telepathic” transmission. In truth no telepathy is involved, for the “transmission” takes place in a dimension beyond distances, in which the illusion that there are two different individuals has utterly dissolved. Furthermore, “telepathy” usually refers to the supposed transmission of thought, but here neither thought nor anything else (information, energies or anything else) is transmitted. There is simply the state of *dharmakaya* in which there are no distances and in which there is neither duality nor plurality.

³⁸⁸ In the original transmission of the inner Tantras of the Path of transformation, the *sambhogakaya* manifestations appeared out of the state of *dharmakaya*.

³⁸⁹ The texts I am using state that the two subdivisions of the *Hinayana* and also the gradual *Mahayana* have Shakyamuni as their root, but do not refer to the sudden *Mahayana*. However, we have seen that according to the *Sutra of Hui-neng* the sudden *Mahayana* also has Shakyamuni as its root.

³⁹⁰ As we have seen, *Yogatantra* cannot be classified either as pertaining completely to the outer Tantras, or as pertaining completely to the inner Tantras.

³⁹¹ This explanation is found in many sources, including several texts translated either fully or partially into Western languages.

³⁹² Adriano Clemente writes in Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 22:

“The *Vairo Drabag*, which is believed to relate an ancient tradition, speaks of the transmission of the teaching through four kayas or dimensions: *swabhavikaya*, or dimension of the fundamental nature, *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and the secret *kaya* or dimension (*gsang-ba'i sku*). However, this subdivision takes into consideration only the transmission of the Tantric and Dzogchen teachings.”

For an explanation of this tradition, see Appendix One to Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, pp. 237-238.

³⁹³ According to the story, Shakyamuni manifested in his usual *nirmanakaya* form as a monk surrounded by a retinue of *shravakas*, and began to expound the teachings of the Path of renunciation. However, the King objected that he wasn't ready to renounce his kingdom, for then his subjects would lose the trustworthy protector they had in him, and there would be the possibility that subsequently they could fall prey to unscrupulous rulers; moreover, he did not see the reason why in order to attain Awakening he should renounce his royal wife and secondary consorts, his delicacies, his palace, his clothes and so on. Realizing

that the King had a definitely superior capacity, Shakyamuni magically sent his retinue of shravakas back to Central India, and instantly transforming into Shri Guhyasamaja in union with his consort, granted the King the initiation of the *Guhyasamajatantra*.

³⁹⁴ Here the word “energy” refers mainly to the *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) form of the manifestation of the energy or *thukje* (*thugs-rje*) aspect of the Base. As was pointed out in a previous note, in Part Two of this book, the three forms of the manifestation of energy or *thukje*, which are the *dang* (*gdangs*), *rölpa* (*rol-pa*) and *tsel* (*rtsal*) energies, will be explained in greater detail.

³⁹⁵ In the case of the fire element, everyone will agree that, on the level of the “physical” world in general, the latter is represented by everything found in an incandescent state. On the level of our own “physical” body, this element corresponds to the heat of our body, that manifests so long as we are alive and our organism functions normally. *Qua* function in general, it represents that of ripening. On the other hand, in the dimension of the true nature of the elements, corresponding to energy, the fire element is simply the color red.

³⁹⁶ In the same place (Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. I., p. 460) the following prediction found in a *Tantra* (Tibetan Text 16) is quoted:

“The *Mahayoga* Tantras will fall on the palace of King Ja.”

Reference to these Tantras falling on the Palace of Indrabhuti is also found, among other texts, in Tulku Thöndup, 1984, p. 13.

³⁹⁷ Dudjom Rinpoche (English 1991, vol. I., p. 460) bases himself on the prediction found in a *Tantra* (Tibetan Text 16), which reads:

“The *Mahayoga* Tantras will fall on the palace of King Ja. The *Anuyoga* Tantras will emerge in the forests of Singhala.”

³⁹⁸ Dharmabodhi of Magadha, author of the *mDo'i-dob-bsdu-ba*, of the *Shes-rab sgron-ma* and of the *bKol-mdo*.

³⁹⁹ Vasudhara, King of Nepal.

⁴⁰⁰ According to Giuseppe Tucci, this country corresponds to Gilgit and neighboring areas. Cf. Tucci, Giuseppe, 1970, English 1980, p. 214.

⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, as stated in the section on the *Anuyoga*, even in this, the highest *Tantra* of the Path of transformation, practitioners lack the capacity to perform the practice in the state of *rigpa* (Awake Awareness or Truth) corresponding to the *dharmakaya*.

⁴⁰² 55 CE is perhaps the most widely admitted date for Garab Dorje's birth (in the West, this date was provided in Tarthang Tulku, 1977b, p. 182). Moreover, according to some of the accounts of the way Mañjushrimitra received the *Atiyoga* transmission from Garab Dorje (for one such account, see Namkhai Norbu, Ed. John Shane, 1986, revised edition 1999), Mañjushrimitra was much older than his Master, as he was a highly respected *acharya* from Nalanda University at the time he went to debate against Garab Dorje, whereas the latter was still a child.

⁴⁰³ The Tibetan term *zag-pa* refers to all that is contaminated by the worldly sphere of interests and actions, and thus particularly to all that is contaminated by the *kleshavarana* or *nyon-sgrib* (i.e., the impediment of the passions or defilements) and the *jñeyavarana* or *shes-sgrib* (i.e., the impediment of knowledge). The term does *not* refer to material existence, which, in itself, is not viewed by any school of Buddhism as being contaminating or evil; in particular, in the teachings of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, in the experience of sentient beings matter is the most common manifestation of the *tsel* (*rtsal*) form of manifestation of energy or *thukje* (*thugs-rje*), which according to the said teachings is one of the three wisdoms of the Base; therefore, it must be regarded as sacred. For a criticism of Greek antisomatic traditions, see Capriles, Elías, 2000b, and Capriles, Elías, work in progress.

⁴⁰⁴ The title “*tönpa*” (*ston-pa*), literally meaning “(Primordial) Revealer,” but usually translated as “Primordial Master,” is given to all Masters who introduce or reintroduce in the physical world a teaching directed toward true Awakening, after teachings of the kind have disappeared from our world. For example, Shakyamuni, Shenrab Miwo and Garab Dorje are all considered to be *tönpas*; however, of these three, only Shakyamuni figures in the Buddhist Dzogchen list of the Twelve Primordial Masters: Garab Dorje is not included in it insofar as he is regarded as an emanation of Shakyamuni, and Shenrab Miwoche is excluded insofar as he was not a Buddhist (however, the latter sometimes has been regarded as an independent emanation of the same *tönpa* as Garab Dorje, for he reintroduced Dzogchen teachings for roughly the same period of humankind as Garab Dorje).

⁴⁰⁵ Though this is not the standard method of *Atiyoga* practice, it is often used for directly introducing rigpa (*rig-pa*). The standard method of *Atiyoga* practice is best exemplified by the principle of Tekchö: when delusion is active, as charged thoughts are manifesting, and often in situations in which the passions are particularly intense, there is an instant rupture of dualism and conceptuality, so that the *dharmakaya* instantly manifests in a perfectly clear manner.

⁴⁰⁶ According to this tradition (Namkhai Norbu, Italian 1988), he did so after receiving Dzogchen teachings from the second Mañjushrimitra.

⁴⁰⁷ According to the Bönpo sources favored by Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu, Tönpa Shenrab Miwoche lived some 3.800 years ago—or, which is the same, around year 1.800 BC. If Tönpa Garab Dorje was born in 55 CE, then he lived over 1800 years after Tönpa Shenrab Miwoche.

However, other accounts offer us quite different dates for tönpa Shenrab Miwoche, ranging from some sixteen thousand years BC to the eighth century CE. In fact, according to a Bönpo chronicle put into writing by Nyima Tenzin in his *Tentsi* (*bsTan-rtsis*: see Kvaerne, Per, 1971), Shenrab Miwoche lived some eighteen thousand years ago. In their turn, most Buddhist Masters give us a much later date for the origin of Bönpo Dzogchen, which they claim originated about the eighth century CE, for according to them at the time Bön assimilated Buddhist teachings in Tibet (among those who uphold this view, some have gone so far as to claim that Shenrab Miwoche lived in the eighth century CE and that he was the Master who appropriated the teachings of Buddhist Dzogchen). A Bönpo tradition that Bönpo Master Lopön Tenzin Namdak has communicated to his disciples also posits a genetic link between Buddhist and Bönpo Dzogchen, but claims that Dzogchen was transmitted in the opposite direction: Buddhist Dzogchen would have derived from Bönpo Dzogchen, for in truth Garab Dorje would have been the famous Bönpo Dzogchen Master Rasang Taphritsa [*Ra sangs ta pi hri tsa*], who would have given teachings to a group of Buddhist Masters, thereby initiating the Buddhist transmission of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*. Other Bönpos (whose views were quoted in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl] 1997, p. 27) have identified Garab Dorje with Zhang-zhung Garab, the thirteenth link in the lineage of the *Oral Transmission of Dzogchen of Shang Shung*. The view I deem most reasonable and methodologically sound is Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu's. Concerning the claims that the Dzogchen of the Bönpos derived from Buddhist Dzogchen, this Master and scholar tells us that this is not so: Bönpo Dzogchen was taught by Shenrab Miwoche long before the arising of Buddhism, but rather than transmitting it eighteen thousand years ago, he taught it around 1,800 BC (furthermore, the Dzogchen teachings transmitted by Shenrab were extremely simple and succinct, and as such they contrast with the sophistication of present day Buddhist Dzogchen). Concerning the claims that Buddhist Dzogchen derived from Bönpo Dzogchen, this Master tells us that whoever may be interested in asserting this hypothesis would have to demonstrate it with scientifically sound evidence—but that presently there is no evidence whatsoever that may prove this thesis.

⁴⁰⁸ Shaivism was the religion of the Dravidians—i.e., of the pre-Indo-European civilization that thrived in the Indus valley. It was centered in the god Shiva and it is supposed to have featured the methods that later on became associated to Tantrism. After the Indo-European invasion, Shaivism was replaced by the Vedic religion, which implemented the Caste system, doing away with Shaiva egalitarianism and introducing a tight sexual repression. Then at some point Hinduism was compounded, which featured the god Shiva as the Destroyer (of illusion) in a trinity in which Brahma was the Creator and Vishnu was the Conserver. Of these three only Shiva was not an Indo-European deity.

⁴⁰⁹ Tucci writes (p. 214):

“[The evolution of Bön into a sophisticated, elaborate structure of teachings] took place under the influence, not only of Buddhism, but also of other religious concepts and doctrines, knowledge of which the Tibetans owed to their Central Asian conquests, and to their contacts with China and India. The Bön traditions themselves preserve allusions to particular places of origin of the most famous masters and codifiers of their doctrine. Areas named include *Bru zha* (Gilgit and neighboring regions) and *Zhang zhung*, a geographical term normally used for West Tibet but which also served as the name of a very much larger region extending from the west of the country to the north and north-east (a region within which eight main languages and twenty-four less important languages were spoken). In addition masters from *Ka che* (Kashmir), from China and from the *Sum pa* are named. Gilgit (the same goes for Kashmir) indicates an area whose religion was strongly affected by Shaivism, and in the immediate neighborhood of which, in Hunza, gnostic teachings of origin both Iranian and Shaivite had spread. These gnostic teachings found their expression in a famous book of the Ismaili schools, and enjoyed great popularity in this area. *Zhang zhung* also, that vast frontier land, was destined to transmit not only its indigenous religious ideas but also

the echoes of foreign concepts. The Bönpo tradition also knows a country called Tagzig (*sTag gzig*), a name which in Tibetan literature refers to the Iranian (or Iranian-speaking) world, or even the world of Islam. From all this we can deduce the influence of Shaivism in the doctrinal field... Admittedly some agreements with Shaivite ideas can be explained indirectly through the mediation of Dzogchen (*rDzogchen*); in other words they may have taken place after this sect, which had much in common with Shaivism, had exerted an influence on the systematization of the Bönpo teachings. Other, clearly older, elements indicate perceptible influences of Iranian beliefs, especially, it would seem, those of Zurvanism (cf. Gabain, A. von [1961], *Das uigurische Königreich von Chotscho 850-1250*. Sitzungsberichte Dtsch. AdW zy Berlin, Kl.f.Sprachen, Literatur u. Kunst, Jg. 1961 Nr.5, Berlin)."

Tucci acknowledges that all that he wrote in this chapter was based on Bönpo literature available before 1970.

And in fact, upon coming to Italy at Tucci's invitation, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu challenged most of the ideas expressed in this quotation, for the direction Tucci ascribes to the influences between traditions often was not the correct one: compare with the quotation from Namkhai Norbu (Chögyäl) 1997 below in the regular text and the continuation of the quotation in one of the immediately following notes. (Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has also noted that the land of Drusha [the correct spelling of the term is *Bru sha* rather than *Bru zha*] roughly corresponded to the present ex-Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan.)

At any rate, it is significant that Tucci acknowledges that the posterior doctrines of the Buddhist Tantras were already present in ancient Bön. He writes (pp. 221-222):

"Often the primal state of nonbeing or of the pure potentiality of being consists simply of a light—an indication of the extremely ancient origin of the 'photism', that doctrine of light, which was later organized into a theoretical system through the Tantras, but which had long been an object of reflection for the Tibetans, who had populated their indigenous Olympus with numerous gods of light."

Is it so strange and difficult to accept that the teachings of the Tantras may have come from Tibet? In Bharati, Agehananda, 1972, we are told that the Shaivite Hindu Tantric tradition contains three Tantras that assert that the Tantric methods were imported into India from Bhota (a term that still today is used in Nepal and some regions of North India in order to refer to Tibet), China and "Mahachina" (Great China). According to one of these stories, Brahma's own son had been meditating for one thousand years by the sea, but had not managed to obtain the vision of the goddess; therefore the yogi went to his father for advise, and Brahma told him to go to the countries in question in order to seek the Tantric teachings. Also in the other two Tantras referred to by Bharati the hero of the story is advised to seek the Tantric methods in those countries. It must be noted that according to two of those Tantras it was Shiva who, in the form of Buddha, was teaching the Tantras in Bhota, China and Mahachina, and according to the remaining Tantra it was Vishnu who, also under to form of Buddha, was teaching them.

Likewise, it is important to remember that the tradition of the Kanphata yogis and their lay associates, the Ughyur, derives from Macchendranath and his disciple Gorakhnath (cf. Briggs, George Weston, 1974), both of whom are listed by the Tantric Buddhist tradition as two of its own 84 mahasiddhas (cf. Dowman, Keith, Ed. and Trans., 1985). (Though there is also a myth according to which a Buddhist *mahasiddha* attained realization by applying the secrets that Shiva transmitted to his consort, Parvati, and which he had overheard by swimming under the floating home of the famed god and goddess, this might as well be intended to suggest that Buddhism took its Tantric teachings from a pre-existing tradition, common to Bön, Shivaism and other traditions. At any rate, in the lack of concrete proofs demonstrating that the Buddhist Vajrayana and the Buddhist Dzogchen were the result of the assimilation by Buddhism of pre-existing non-Buddhist traditions, we must continue to assume that they originated independently of such traditions.)

⁴¹⁰ As we know, *Ati* is the name of Dzogchen *qua* vehicle, corresponding to the Path of spontaneous liberation. "Chiti" (*spyi-ti*) is the name given to the more general methods of *Ati* and in particular to certain terma (*gter-ma*) teachings transmitting methods considered to be more essential and important than the more common ones of the same tradition. In turn, the terma teachings of the Yangthik (*yang-thig*) are deemed even more important than the ones called "Chiti."

⁴¹¹ In the *Pao-p'u-tzu* or *Nei P'ien* Ko-hung tells us that Chuang-tzu (Creel, Herrlee G., 1970, I, p. 22; Watts, Alan, 1975, written in 1973 with the collaboration of Al Chung-Liang Huang, p. 91; a partial English translation of Ko-hung's writings appeared in 1967 in the book now available as Ware, James R., trans., 1981):

"...says that life and death are just the same, brands the effort to preserve life as laborious servitude, and praises death as a rest: this doctrine is separated by millions of miles from that of [the] *shen-hsien* (holy immortals)."

⁴¹² As noted above, what Herrlee G. Creel (1970) called “Contemplative Taoism” and that I have called “Taoism of Unorigination” encompassed the teachings and praxis of Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu and Lieh-tzu—and, I believe, the Masters of Huainan as well. I have not found the metaphor of the snake shedding its skin or any reference to any of the special modes of death resulting from Dzogchen practice in the extant texts attributed to these Masters. However, as shown in the main text of this note, the Primordial Revealer of Bönpo Dzogchen (*bon po rdzogs chen*), Shenrab Miwoche (*gshen rab mi bo che*), had disciples from China, India, Kashmir, and Persia or surrounding areas, who diffused their Master’s teachings in their respective countries. In this light, the coincidence between the views of Taoism of Unorigination and those of Dzogchen, and the fact that some brands of Taoism used the image of the snake shedding its skin, may be taken to suggest that Taoism of Unorigination derived from Dzogchen *Atiyoga* via Shenrab Miwoche’s Chinese disciple (whose Tibetan name was, as we have seen, Legtang Mangpo). In case Unorigination Taoism actually led to the attainment of the body of light, which can only be attained through the “spontaneous perfection” of lhundrub (*lhun-grub*), which is utterly beyond action and as such may correspond to the Taoist principles of *wu-wei* (nonaction), *wei-wu-wei* (action through nonaction) or *tzu-jan* (spontaneity or “self-so”), it must have been based on the principle of spontaneous liberation rather than on that of Tantric transformation or on that of Sutric renunciation, which do not lead to the special modes of death. (The fact that in the extant texts of Taoism of Unorigination there is no reference to the snake shedding its skin or any other of the four modes of death attained through Dzogchen practice, or to the methods for attaining these modes of death, could be explained by the fact that these texts were intended to be public treatises, which should not deal with the innermost methods of this type of Taoism and their results.)

Most scholars associate the image of the snake that sheds its skin with what Creel termed Hsien Taoism, which since the eighth century BCE has been using generative means comprising visualization, recitation, retention of the seed-essence, erotic relationships, alchemy, breathing exercises, diet and so on, in order to prolong the human lifespan and allegedly *produce* an immortal body (since, as shown in the main text of this note, this is impossible insofar as whatever is produced, created, born, compounded or conditioned is impermanent, in general practitioners of this brand of Taoism conformed themselves with attaining long lifespans). This system must have been concocted by deluded individuals who, after seceding from Taoism of Unorigination, appropriated methods from Tantrism or analogous doctrines in order to pursue aims contrary, not only to those of Taoism of Unorigination and Dzogchen, but to those of Tantrism as well. Furthermore, as stated in the regular text of this section, after seceding from Taoism of Unorigination, Hsien pseudo-masters turned against the greatest Masters of the latter form of Taoism.

However, as shown in the regular text, the term *shen hsien* and the image of the snake that sheds its skin were not exclusive to so-called Hsien Taoists such as Ko-hung and his like. In fact, in the doctrines of what later on came to be known as Chuan Chen (Complete Reality) Taoism, there seemed to coincide the views (and therefore perhaps also the methods) of what I have called Taoism of Unorigination—which rather than proposing that we *create* or *produce* something, exhort us to discover our unborn and undying true nature or condition of everything—with the image of the snake that sheds its skin and with the use of the term “holy immortal” or *shen-hsien* to refer to those who attain the highest realization possible. As also shown in the regular text, if the hypothesis according to which Taoists of Unorigination practiced Dzogchen and therefore had the possibility of attaining the body of light (which as we have seen is the attainment illustrated by the image of the snake that sheds its skin) were correct, Chuan Chen Taoism may have been the form of Taoism that in later times gave continuity to the views, doctrines and practices of the Taoism of Unorigination (independently of whether or not it conserved the original doctrines and methods and therefore could lead to the body of light).

In fact, Chuan Chen Taoism made it perfectly clear that in their system “becoming an immortal” did not refer to the *production* of a new *conditioned* state or condition. According to the 18th century commentator Liu I-ming (Liu I-ming, trans. Thomas Cleary, 1988), the term referred to the unveiling of the pure and perfect primordial (“pre-natal”) awareness that... “is not born and does not die.” In Chuan Chen terminology this primordial state is variously referred to as the “precious pearl,” the “pre-natal mind,” the “triplex unity of essence, energy, and spirit” (essence, nature and energy?) or simply the “Way” (Tao). Liu I-ming tells us that “awake or asleep, it is always there,” and the same applies to stillness and movement, which are the Yin and Yang—passive and creative, dark and light, empty and full—facets of the ever-present primordial state, comparable to waves rising and falling on the sea, or wind stirring the air. Liu I-ming describes the

realization of the primordial condition as “a stateless state... tranquil and unstirring, yet sensitive and effective—call on it and it responds [with movement]; in quietude it is [perfectly] clear.” Since movement is an indivisible aspect of the primordial state, in order to integrate it, Taoism has *tai chi chuan*, the eight pieces of brocade, and other moving *chi-kung* forms.

For a period, the aspiring Chuan Chen adept retires from the world and goes into seclusion in the mountains in order to practice the teachings and attain spontaneous perfection—a process known as *hsiou tao* (“cultivating the Way”). Finally, when the “complete reality” of Tao has been realized, the adept “returns to the towns and markets” to apply the Way “among ordinary people” in all the myriad activities of daily life. Despite the fact that, as noted above, Chuan Chen Taoism referred to its own realized ones as *shen-hsien*, the contrast between this system and that of Ko-hung and other forgers is further evidenced by the following words by Liu I-ming: “The Tao is a treasure... having nothing to do with material alchemy. It is utterly simple, utterly easy... It is completely spiritual, true goodness. The ridiculous thing is that foolish people seek mysterious marvels, when they do not know enough to preserve the mysterious marvel that is actually present.” (Quotes from Liu I-ming were taken from Reid, Daniel, 2002/2003, who in turn took them from Liu I-ming, trans. Thomas Cleary, 1988.)

⁴¹³ An example of thinle (*phrin-las*) and dzepa (*mdzad-pa*) *qua* ways of manifestation of the dynamic of the lhundrub aspect of the Base, is the dynamic of rölpa (*rol-pa*) energy in the bardo (*bar-do*) of *dharmata* (chönyi bardo [*chos-nyid bar-do*]) known as thinle drakpo (*phrin-las drag-po*), as it manifests in the practices of Thögel and the Yangthik. Longchenpa and Rongzompa do not coincide in their usages of the two terms; cf. Longchenpa’s *Tekchog* (*Theg-pa’i mchog rin-po-che’i mdzod* I, p. 17, II, pp. 47ff) and Rongzompa’s *Rongdrel* (*Rong-’grel: rGyud-rgyal gsang-ba snying-po’i ’grel-pa dkon-cos ’grel*, fol. 115a). Cf. also Yungtön Dorje Päl Zangpo (*gYung-ston rDo-rje dPal bZang-po*), Sälche Melong (*gSal-byed me-long [dPal gsang-ba snying-po’i rgyud-don gsal-byed me-long]*, fols. 163a f.), whose interpretations are widely accepted. For a discussion of the interpretations in these texts, cf. Guenther, Herbert V., 1984, pp. 251 note 27, 277 note 3 and 278 note 8.

⁴¹⁴ In Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, Note 247 by Adriano Clemente, p. 217, we are told that in Tibetan the twelve verses read: *rang rig gnyug ma kun gyi gzhi / rtsol bral bgrod med lhun grub lam / ci bzhin lhun grub ’bras bu ste / yang dag don la lta ru med / yang dag don la bsgom du med / yang dag don la spyod du med / sems kyi dpe ni nam mkha’ ’dra / sems kyi rtags ni sems nyid yin / sems kyi don ni bon nyid do / skye ba med pa’i bon dbyings na / ’gag pa med pa’i ye shes gnas / skye ’gag gnyis med thig le gcig*. Their translation in full is:

Regarding the condition of the base, (op. 24, p. 171, 5) says:

“One’s original state of *rigpa* is the base of everything.”

Regarding the nature of the path, (op. 24: p. 171, 5) says:

“The path is spontaneously perfect beyond effort and progress.”

Regarding the nature of the fruit, (op. 24: p. 171, 5) says:

“The fruit is spontaneously perfect in its own condition.”

Thus is explained the nature of base, path and fruit.

Regarding the nature of the view, (op. 24: p. 171, 5) says:

“In terms of the real meaning there is no view to uphold.”

Regarding the nature of meditation, (op. 24: p. 172, 1) says:

“In terms of the real meaning there is nothing to meditate.”

Regarding the nature of the behavior, (op. 24: p. 172, 1) says:

“In terms of the real meaning there is no conduct to adopt.”

Thus is explained the nature of view, meditation and behavior.

Regarding the nature of the example, (op. 24: p. 172, 1) says:

“The example of mind is space.”

Regarding the nature of the characteristic sign, (op. 24: p. 172, 1) says:

“The characteristic sign of mind is the nature of mind.”

Regarding the nature of the meaning, (op. 24: p. 172, 1) says:

“The meaning of mind is the ultimate nature of phenomena.”

This is the explanation of the nature of the example, of the characteristic sign and of the meaning.

Regarding the nature of the unborn, of the uninterrupted and of the non-duality between birth and cessation, (op. 24: p. 172, 1) says:

“In the ultimate unborn dimension

Abides wisdom without interruption,
The single sphere beyond the duality of birth and cessation.”

⁴¹⁵ In Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, Note 245 by Adriano Clemente, p. 215, we read: In the present case *snyan rgyud*, literally ‘oral transmission’, signifies an aphorism encapsulating in a few words the content of vast and profound teachings.

⁴¹⁶ As shown in a previous note, there are quite different dates for Tönpa Shenrab Miwoche, ranging from some sixteen thousand years BC to the eighth century CE.

In Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, Note 244 by Adriano Clemente, p. 215, we read: The traditional lineage of the *rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan brgyud* is as follows: Kun tu bzang po, gShen lha ’od dkar, rGyal ba gShen rab, Tshad med ’od ldan, ’Phrul gshen snang ldan, Bar snang khu byug, bZang bza’ ring btsun, ’Chi med gtsug phud, gSang ba ’dus pa, Yong su dag pa.

⁴¹⁷ In Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, Note 249 by Adriano Clemente, p. 217, we read: “Gyer chen snang bzher lod po* ([Cherchen Nangzher Löpo], VII-VIII centuries) received the teachings of the *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud* from a *nirmanakaya* manifestation of the ‘rainbow body’ (*’ja’ lus*) of Taphritsa, a teacher who had lived some centuries earlier.” Therefore those interested in asserting that Dzogchen leaked into the Bön tradition from Buddhist Dzogchen could adduce that Cherchen Nangzher Löpo received Dzogchen teachings from Buddhist Masters and then put their essence into writing, claiming that he had received them from a *nirmanakaya* manifestation of the ‘rainbow body’ (*’ja’ lus*) of Taphritsa.

*The Wylie transliteration of this name had to be amended; in the original it appeared as “Gyer chen snang bzher lod po.”

⁴¹⁸ Dudjom Rinpoche (English 1991; Trans.: G. Dorje and M. Kapstein. pp. 706-7) notes that he possessed both the instructions of seven successive Masters of India and those of seven successive Masters of China, and notes that it was from him that the Kham tradition of the Semde series of Dzogchen teachings arose (which continued through Chokro Zangkar Dzökur and Yazi Pöntön, to Rongzompa).

⁴¹⁹ The English version of this book (Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, 2004) reads “apex” instead of “final aim.” I kept the term “final aim” that appears in the Italian version (Namkhai Norbu, Chögyäl, 1997) because “apex” conveys the idea that Shakyamuni himself taught Dzogchen, which is certainly not the case.

⁴²⁰ Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu goes on:

“Some could object that Dzogchen arose in Oddiyana and that therefore it could not have been taught by Shenrab Miwoche. The origin of the Dzogchen [of the Buddhist tradition] no doubt has its source in the Master from Oddiyana Garab Dorje, and Oddiyana has been traditionally considered as the birthplace of all Buddhist Anuttaratantras, but it is difficult to establish the precise geographical location of this country.

“Many Western scholars have identified Oddiyana with the Swat region of Pakistan, and other scholars are still carrying out research in this regard, but all ancient sources agree in localizing Oddiyana vaguely at the North-West of India. Likewise, the legendary country of Shambhala [referred to in] Buddhist literature has never been really identified, but by examining the texts that refer to it we would be led to place it in the same region as Oddiyana. In many texts it is explained that at some point Oddiyana and Shambhala became pure dimensions, disappearing from ordinary vision, but in truth it seems more logical to think those countries were conquered by Turkish Islamic peoples that in some texts are called Turuka. Therefore, all Buddhists were converted to Islam and the Buddhist teachings and the various branches of their culture were radically annihilated. Later on, with the passing of time, all traces of the history and even of the existence of this civilization were lost. Consequently, it is likely that the countries known in antiquity as Oddiyana and Shambhala, where the Indian siddhas went overcoming countless risks and difficulties, belonged to the Zhang-zhung or limited with it. This in turn could lead to speculate that the archaic Dzogchen taught by Shenrab Miwoche may have later on developed [as Buddhist Dzogchen], because in the history of the Oral Transmission of the Zhang-zhung we read that the thirteenth Master of the Dzogchen lineage having its source in Shenrab Miwoche was a certain Zhang-zhung Garab, who could have been the same person as Garab Dorje, whereas the tradition of the “Twelve Primordial Masters” quoted in Buddhist Dzogchen literature could have derived from the lineage of twelve Masters who preceded Zhang-zhung Garab in the lineage of the Dzogchen of Zhang-zhung.

“These hypotheses simply outlined could surprise and disturb many Tibetan scholars, but it is indispensable to research and reflect accurately concerning the true origins of the culture and the spiritual traditions of Tibet.

“At any rate, the true principle of the Dzogchen teaching is Knowledge, that is, the Understanding of the Primordial State, natural and unmodified, of each and every individual, male or female. Therefore Dzogchen cannot be assimilated to a religion or a philosophical doctrine, nor to the content of some sacred

scriptures. Ancient Dzogchen texts assert that also among primitive peoples, where the Buddhist teachings never arrived, there could be many yogis and yoginis possessing the perfect knowledge of the state of Dzogchen. Hence one should not be surprised that, both in Bön and in Buddhism, there may be teachings that explain how to realize this state of true Knowledge, and there is no need to keep the limited mentality of wanting to attribute by all means the origins of Dzogchen to Bön or to the Nyingma [Buddhist] tradition. Dzogchen is a knowledge that transcends the limits of time: in fact, it is said that countless Masters possessing this Knowledge and their teachings are present throughout the universe. In particular, the Tantra *All-surpassing Sound* (*Drataljur* [*sGra thal 'gyur*]) asserts that the Dzogchen teaching is diffused in thirteen dimensions called *thalwa* (*thal-ba*) or “beyond our solar system.” Therefore, it is fundamental to surpass the sectarianism of a limited vision.”

Concerning the assertion that after the Turkish Islamic invasion all Buddhists from Oddiyana and Shambhala were converted to Islam and the Buddhist teachings and the various branches of their culture were radically annihilated, so that later on, with the passing of time, all traces of the history and even of the existence of this civilization were lost, it must be noted that some of the Buddhist Masters who were given the choice of dying or converting to Islam opted for the second possibility as a means to give continuity to their own soteriological traditions within Sufism (the esoteric tradition within Islam, which thrived especially among Sunnis) and the Ismailian tradition (the most esoteric branch of Shi'ite Islam). The Sayed Idries Shah, who was the head of the Kajagan (Naqshbandi) school of Sufism, writes (Shah, Idries, 1964, Spanish translation 1975, p. 197):

“Jabir Ibn el-Hayyam was for a very long time an intimate associate of the *Barmakies* (or Barmecides), viziers to Harun ar-Rashid. These *Barmakies* were descendants from the priests of the Afghani Buddhist temples, and it was believed that they possessed the ancient teaching that had been transmitted to them from that area...”

According to Shah, Jabir Ibn el-Hayyam transmitted to his Sufi disciples the doctrines he received from the Barmakies, which therefore had their continuity within Sufism. But what does the term *Barmakies* mean? In Parain, Brice, Director of the collection, 1969, Spanish translation 1972, p. 244, we read:

“Associated to the region of Bactria (or Zariaspa) and its capital, Bactra (or Bactra-Zariaspa = Balkh), are the names of the Barmakies (Barmecides), who gave a determinant impulse to the penetration of Iranianism in the Abbaside court and to the ascension of this Iranian family to the first ranks of the Caliphate (750-804). Their name comes from the term Barmak, which designated the hereditary dignity of the supreme priest of the Buddhist temple of Nawbahar (in Sanskrit, *Nova Bihara*, “New Monastery”) in Balkh, which later on legend transformed into the “Temple of Fire.” In Balkh, the “mother of cities” (destroyed, and then reconstructed in 726 by the Barmak), there co-existed the Greek, Buddhist, Mazdean, Manichean and Nestorian Christian cultures, accumulated in the course of the centuries. Mathematics and astronomy, astrology and alchemy, medicine and mineralogy, and, next to these sciences, a vast apocryphal literature, saw their birth in the cities located in the great route to the East, which Alexander had traveled in the past. From these cities, beginning in the middle of the VIIIth century, astronomers, astrologers, physicians and alchemists moved to the new center of spiritual life created by Islam.”

With regard to Sufism, it must be born in mind that Kajagan (Naqshbandi) Sufis have a most secret “Swift Path” that might perhaps have some genetic relation to the Dzogchen Atiyana that had been transmitted by Buddhists Masters in Oddiyana and Bactria, and possibly also in Sogdiana and so on. With regard to the Ismailian connection, it may perhaps be relevant to mention that Shah also tells us that (Shah, Idries, 1964, Spanish translation 1975, p. 197):

“Who was Jafar Sadiq, teacher of [the great Sufi Master and alchemist] Jabir [Ibn el-Hayyam]? No one less than the Sixth Imam [of Islam]...”

⁴²¹ As previously remarked, different types of Akanishta are spoken of according to the different manifestations of wisdom.

⁴²² Keep in mind that, in many texts of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, the term *dagnyi chenpo* (*bdag nyid chen po*; Skt., *paramatma*), which could be translated as “total I-ness,” is used to refer in a poetic and metaphorical way to the single true condition of all individuals and of all entities in the universe (which would be inexpressible in literal terms), in order to emphasize the fact that there is nothing external to this single true condition. This usage of the term occurs in root Tantras of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga*, and in particular in the root *Tantra* of the Semde (*sems-sde*) series of Dzogchen, the *Kunche Gyälpo*, in which it recurs throughout the text (cf. Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999). Since this *Tantra* exists in English and

so the reader may easily confirm the facts by reading the book, let me quote another example of this way of using the term “I,” which appears in Tibetan Text 18:

“Great Master, we See the I.”

The most ancient Dzogchen texts from the Bön tradition, on the one hand, and the Shaiva tradition, on the other, designated the true condition of everything as “I.” In order to make it more difficult for people to conceive of this true condition as a substance, or for them to attribute anthropomorphic characteristics to it such as those that monotheistic religions attribute to their God, in Buddhism the existence of a universal “I” is negated, and a great emphasis is placed on the concept of selflessness or “not-I” (Skt. *anatman*; Pali, *anatta*). Nevertheless, neither of the two terminologies—the one that designates the true condition of everything as “I” and the one that emphasizes that an “I” may not be spoken of in this respect—is either totally correct or totally incorrect. As Nagarjuna put it in the *Madhyamakavritti* (cf. Guenther, Herbert V., 1957, 2d. Ed. 1974):

“A position (*paksha*) implies a counter-position (*pratipaksha*), and neither of them is true.”

As we have seen, no concept can correspond exactly to the true essence and nature of everything, for every concept is defined *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*, and this implies that the concept necessarily has to establish a limit in order to exclude something that could not be included in it unless it were destroyed *qua* concept (which, as Nagarjuna pointed out well, implies that it has to have its counterposition or *pratipaksha*). Therefore, if a concept is used to refer to this true condition, it is indispensable to keep in mind that it cannot be totally precise, and that the opposite concept would be just as valid and as imprecise as the one we have chosen to refer to it: it is equally valid and at the same time equally imprecise to designate the true condition as “I” as to call it “not-I,” for the first of these terms implies that there is something “other” in relation to it, which is erroneous, while the second implies that it is “other” in respect to itself, which is equally erroneous.

⁴²³ The “lords of the three families” (*rigs gsum gyi lha*) are: Arya Mañjushri (from the *tathagata* family), Arya Avalokiteshwara (from the *padma* family) and Shri Guhyapati Vajrapani (from the *vajra* family), who represent, respectively, the essence of the three vajras—Body, Voice and Mind—of all Awake ones. In the cycle *bDe gshegs bka’ brgyad* from the Old School tradition they correspond to Mañjushri the Body or Jampelku (*’Jam-dpal sku*), Lotus the Voice or Pemasung (*Padma-gsung*) and Great Glorious Awake Awareness or Yangdakthug (*Yang-dag thugs*). According to the texts, these three Masters transmitted the teachings to gods, *naga*, *yaksha*, *rakshasa* and humans.

⁴²⁴ An example of this type of classification of the lineages of the kama transmission is what is known as dogyüsemsum (*mdo-rgyud-sems-gsum*), which distinguishes between: (1) the gyü (*rgyud*) section of *Mahayoga*, which is the one containing the eighteen Tantric cycles of this vehicle, which has the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* as its root text; (2) the do (*mdo*) or *Sutra* (a term that in this case does not refer to the sutras of the Path of renunciation, but to *Anuyoga* Tantras) section, which comprises five texts, and the root text of which is the *Düpe do* (*’Dus-pa’i mdo*); (3) the sem (*sems*) section, which includes the three subdivisions of Dzogchen *Atiyoga*.

If we took the first of the groups referred to above as an example, it would have to be noted that the Buddha Shakyamuni had prophesized the manifestation, after his *parinirvana* (physical death of a Buddha), of an “essential doctrine that Shri Guhyapati Vajrapani would reveal to King Indrabhuti of Oddiyana” (it is not clear which of the kings bearing this name received this transmission, but since the one in question was a contemporary of the *mahasiddha* Kukuraja [the “Lord of the dogs”], to whom he transmitted this lineage, it is supposed that it must have been an intermediate Indrabhuti). After the king had marvelous dreams foretelling something exceptional, he received the volumes of the eighteen *Mahayoga* Tantras (the root *Tantra*, which is the *Guhyagarbha*; the five principal Tantras; the five Tantras of *sadhana* [which should not be confused with the eight *sadhana* of the section with this same name]; the five Tantras of action, and the two supplementary Tantras). As we have seen, Indrabhuti transmitted this lineage to Kukuraja, and then it continued to pass through successive links until it was established in Tibet, where it has continued to be transmitted until our days.

⁴²⁵ Even the present day Dzogchen teachings of the Bön tradition originate from Garab Dorje, insofar as, with the passing of time, the Bönpos gradually appropriated the totality of the teachings of all Nyingmapa vehicles, until, finally, they came to have a canon identical to that of the Old School of Tibetan Buddhism (including the totality of the Buddhist Sutras and Tantras). Since the Buddhist Dzogchen teachings were much more sophisticated than the Bönpo ones, after having received them the Bönpos gradually forgot their own, much older Dzogchen teachings. (Some Bönpo Masters, such as Lopön Tenzin Namdak and

his disciples, give an inverted account of the above, according to which in reality Garab Dorje was the Bönpo Master Tapihrtsa, and the teachings of *Mahayana*, *Vajrayana* and *Atiyogatantrayana* Buddhism were all introduced by Bönpo Masters. It is not clear to me whether, according to this view, the Bönpo Masters are supposed to have written their texts in Buddhist terminology because Buddhism had become the official religion in the region of Zhang-zhung where they resided [probably the land that at the time was known as Oddiyana], or whether they were originally written in Bön terminology and then translated into Buddhist language when the Indian-originated new religion became dominant. However, what is crystal clear to me is that this Bönpo interpretation is not sustained by any historical or archeological evidence, and that so long as this continues to be so this interpretation should be seen as a partisan concoction.)

Nevertheless, not all current Dzogchen *Atiyoga* teachings originate from Garab Dorje. In particular, the teachings of the Menngagde (*man-ngag-sde*) or *Upadeshavarga* series of Dzogchen *Atiyoga* that Garab Dorje bequeathed us were extremely brief and bare, but the teachings of this section gradually multiplied and became more and more sophisticated as the greatest Masters of each period codified their experience of the practice. It may also be noted that (as will be seen in the second part of the book and has already been suggested in a previous footnote), as the teachings of the “*vajra* bridge” of the Longde series gradually lost their power to rapidly eradicate or neutralize the delusory valorization of subtle and super-subtle thoughts and thereby lead practitioners to levels of realization as complete as the rainbow body, progressively more and more emphasis was placed on the Nyingthik (*snying-thig*) practices of the Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga*—which developed as series of *termas* (*gter-ma*) were revealed successively, and as the greatest Masters codified the learning they did in the course of their own practice. As a consequence of this, supreme forms of realization continue to be common—in particular, the one giving rise to dissolution into space by means of the integration of the thatness (*tathata*, *de-bzhin-nyid*) of one’s own intrinsic awareness in the ultimate natural sphere or rangzhin chökyi jing (*rang-bzhin chos-kyi dbyings*), just like the inner space of a jar fuses with external space when the jar breaks (for an explanation of this, see Part Two of this book). Likewise, the Thögel and Yangthik practices of the Upadesha or Menngagde kept on developing and even becoming more precise and sophisticated, so that the body of light (*ökyiku* [*’od-kyi sku*] or *öphung* [*’od-phung*]) and the total transference or phowa chenpo (*’pho-ba chen-po*) continue to be real possibilities for practitioners.

Traditionally, perhaps the most important Nyingthik teachings have been:

- (a) Those of the Vima Nyingthik (*Bi-mai’i snying-thig*) originating from Vimalamitra. This great Master transmitted the instructions of the Explanatory Tantras to Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo (*Myang Ting-’dzin bZang-po*), who transmitted the oral instructions to his disciple Dro Rinchenwar (*’Bro Rin-chen-’bar*), who bequeathed them to Be Lodrö Wangchuk (*sBas blo-gros dBang-phyug*), who in his turn transmitted them to Dangma Lhungyel (*lDang-ma Lhun-rgyal*) the elder. Seeing that conditions were not right to hand over the root text at that time, Vimalamitra hid it as a *terma* (*gter-ma*) at the Gegung of Chimphu near Samye. In his turn, Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo hid the Explanatory Tantras in the Zhwe temple that he built in Uru, and these were later revealed by Dangma Lhungyel the elder, who communicated the two forms of the teaching that he possessed—the oral instruction and the Explanatory Tantras—to the great Jetsun Senge Wangchuk, who as a result of his direct encounters with the *vajra* body of Vimalamitra, received the Nyingthik teachings directly from him and later revealed the original texts that the latter had concealed in Chimphu—and then, at the age of hundred and twenty five, demonstrated the total transference or phowa chenpo (*’pho-ba chen-po*). Later on, Longchen Rabjampa edited these teachings into their present form.
- (b) Those of the (Menngag) Khandro Nyingthik ([*Man-ngag*] *mKha’-’gro snying-thig*) originating from Padmasambhava. The great Master from Oddiyana hid the eighteen *Tantra* of this transmission, which were extensive upadeshas, in a rock in lower Bumthang (in the present-day kingdom of Bhutan), and the profoundly condensed upadeshas in Dwagpo (in the south of present-day Tibet); the texts in Dwagpo were revealed centuries later by the tertön (*gter-ston*) Pema Ledreltsel (*Padma Las-’brel-rtsal*, who had been recognized as the tulku of the daughter of King Trisongdetsen to whom Padmasambhava had entrusted them (after her early death, upon summoning her back to life), while the Bumthang texts were revealed later by Longchen Rabjampa (recognized as the tulku of the tertön Pema Ledreltsel), who edited the teachings into their definitive form.
- (b) In our times, the most practiced Nyingthik teachings are perhaps those of the Longchen Nyingthik (*kLong-chen snying-thig* or, to use the complete name, *Thus-gter klong-chen snying-thig gzhung-rtsa-ba gsal-*

byed-dang bcas-pa) revealed by the great tertön Jigme Lingpa (who had visions of Longchen Rabjampa, as well as of Mañjuśrimitra and Padmasambhava, among others).

For an account of the lineages of the Vima Nyingthik and the (Menngag) Khandro Nyingthik, see Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu's Foreword to: Reynolds, John Myrdhin, translation, introduction and commentaries, 1996.

⁴²⁶ Some teachings of the Sutrayana were also transmitted as termas: as we have seen, it is said that Shakyamuni left the sutras of the *Prajñāparamita* under the custody of the nagas for Nagarjuna to take them out as termas when the times were ripe.

⁴²⁷ This is a well known fact, diffused in the West at a relatively early date thanks to the publication, in Evans-Wentz, W. Y., Ed., translated by Kazi-Dawa Sangdup, 1954, of the translation of a terma by Padmasambhava revealed by Karma Lingpa. In this publication it is asserted that "the supreme tertön cannot be a eunuch," which is an obligatory reference when presenting the translation of a terma discovered by that tertön, who died prematurely as a result of not having been able to unite with the consort prophesized to him and not having obtained certain required omens. One of the footnotes from the most recent translation of the same terma of Karma Lingpa, which is Reynolds, John M., translation, Introduction and commentaries, 1989b, reads (p. 130):

"If a tertön discovers a complete cycle of terma teachings, he must then meet with his secret consort (*gsang yum*) in order to pursue certain secret practices; and if (the tertön has until then been) a monk, generally he will have to give up the robe and become a ngagpa (*sngags-pa*) or Tantric *yogin*."

⁴²⁸ In Tulku Thöndup's essay "The Terma Tradition" (in Tulku Thöndup, 1995, pp. 100-101) we read:

"Most of the tertöns, before discovering any ter, seem to be ordinary people. They do not necessarily appear as scholars, meditators or tulkus. However, due to their inner spiritual attainments and the transmissions they have received in their past lives, they suddenly begin discovering mystic ters at the appropriate time, without the need of any apparent training. At the beginning, skeptics often raise doubts about these discoveries from such unexpected people. In some cases, a tertön's natural directness and honesty may appear as unconventional or even impolite to those who hold conservative values. But gradually, if they are true ter discoveries, they gain the recognition of higher spiritual authorities and the respect of the people, whom they benefit. It is important to understand this cultural context; otherwise a great tertön may be mistaken for a charlatan. For example, it is unfortunate that a Western author recently disparaged a great tertön of the Nyingma tradition by citing criticism of the tertön by some of his unqualified contemporary detractors and by portraying the tertön's expressions of humility (on the one hand) and confidence in realization (on the other hand) as contradictions, even though these are characteristics of the writings of many Buddhists sages."

⁴²⁹ According to some accounts, Yeshe Tsogyäl was a Chinese consort of King Trisongdetsen; however, the most widely admitted version is that she was a Tibetan noble lady (or princess). According to some accounts, she was married to the King.

⁴³⁰ This term is owing to the fact that most such papers are yellow or golden; nevertheless, this does not imply that the paper has to be of one of these colors.

⁴³¹ As we have seen repeatedly, the *dharmadhatu* is primordial space, where everything that manifests and can be known arises. The counterpart of the *dharmadhatu* is an awareness that pervades it and that is absolutely indivisible from it.

⁴³² If the *dharmadhatu* is *namkha* (*nam-mkha'*) or boundless space, and *rang-rig* or self-arisen *rig-pa* is the source of treasures, then *rang-rig* is like a norbu (Skt. *chintamala*; Tib., *nor-bu*) or wish-fulfilling jewel. In this sense, it may be said that the source of treasures is Namkhai Norbu (*Nam-mkha'i Nor-bu*).

Furthermore, there is a direct relation between the discovery of terma and the original Greek meaning of the term "symbol:" two friends would tear a piece of cardboard in such a way that the two resulting sides would fit, so that by putting the two pieces of cardboard together they could either recognize each other in the future, or send someone unknown to the other party to seek help. A tertön receives from outside what could be compared to the other side of the cardboard, and this awakens him to the existence and meaning of his own side of it—and thus the whole comes out in the form of the treasure. The mutual recognition of the tertön and the one providing a key for his discoveries, or of the tertön and the holder of the treasures (i.e., his lineage holder), is also related to the original Greek meaning of the term "symbol." And so on.

⁴³³ For an "intermediate" explanation of treasures or termas, I particularly recommend Tulku Thöndup's essay "The Terma Tradition," reproduced in Tulku Thöndup, 1995. For a more extensive discussion, Tulku Thöndup, 1986, may be consulted.

⁴³⁴ Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 93.

⁴³⁵ In Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, Note 9 by Adriano Clemente, p. 275, we read:

“The *mantras* called *rigs sngags* have the characteristic feature of always having specific functions related to diverse requirements or needs.”

⁴³⁶ In *Ch’an* or *Zen* there is another esoteric explanation of the Three Jewels (Jap., *sambo*), which distinguishes three levels of meaning: (1) “the three precious ones as one single body;” (2) “the three precious ones as manifestation;” and (3) “the three precious ones as verification.” For an explanation of these, see: Fischer-Schreiber, I., Erhard, F-K, and Diener, M. S., 1989, entrance on *Sambo*, pp. 183-184. (Also Schumacher, S. and Woerner, G., 1993, entrance on *Sambo*, p. 302.)

⁴³⁷ When the three Paths are taken into account, the Path of renunciation of the *Sutrayana* is the outer Path, the Path of transformation of the *Vajrayana* is the inner Path, and the Path of spontaneous liberation of the *Atiyana* is the secret Path; therefore, in this context *Sutrayana*-style Refuge is the outer Refuge, *Vajrayana*-style Refuge is the inner Refuge, and *Atiyana*-style Refuge is the secret Refuge.

⁴³⁸ The Dzogchen teachings (and also the sudden *Mahayana* corresponding to *Ch’an* or *Zen*) emphasize the fact that beings are our own delusorily valued / absolutized thoughts. When we are possessed by malevolent thoughts, we are hell-beings; when we are possessed by craving thoughts, we are pretas (hungry ghosts or Tantaluses); and so on. Insofar as we *become* a certain kind of individual due to being consistently possessed by various classes of recurrent thoughts, which succeed each other in consistent ways, we *make ourselves* continuous individuals, becoming a given “seed of direction of energies” (Skt., *bija*; Tib., *sabön* [*sa-bon*]). Furthermore, whenever we act under the influence of delusorily valued thoughts of any of the six realms, it is ourselves (rather than the thoughts) who create *karma* for rebirth in that realm, for it is our consciousness that volitionally puts itself under the influence of a given type of thoughts and then acts under their sway. In fact, by acting under the influence of a give type of thoughts we create the cause for putting ourselves under the influence of the same type of thoughts in the future, and thus to take birth in the corresponding realm.

In Dzogchen, in particular, “emptying *samsara*” does not mean that there are no longer human beings, animals and so on in a physical, external reality; what it means is that the uninterrupted process of spontaneous liberation of thought burns out the seed for delusory thoughts to manifest, and therefore such thoughts can no longer arise. Once this happens, as Jigme Lingpa remarked, though sentient beings having the right view and propensities perceive the fully realized individual as acting in their behalf, the latter no longer perceives sentient beings to be helped or Awakened.

⁴³⁹ With regard to the relation between the Refuge of the Path of renunciation and the Refuge of the Path of transformation, cf. Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, pp. 93-103. It may be pointed out that the Refuge that is explained in this paragraph is the one corresponding to the external level of Refuge on the Path of transformation. (The inner level is explained below in the regular text of this chapter; the secret level will not be discussed here.)

The term “dakinis” has many different levels of meaning, which may be classified into the three kayas, and into a series of classes. The dakinis of the three kayas, as well as all wisdom-dakinis, are helpers of the practice. Furthermore, from the standpoint of the male, the dakini *qua* Tantric secret consort or sang yum (*gsang yum*) is a primary helper with many of the main practices of the *Vajrayana* Path of transformation.

⁴⁴⁰ As we have seen, when the three Paths are taken into account, the Path of renunciation of the *Sutrayana* is the outer Path, the Path of transformation of the *Vajrayana* is the inner Path, and the Path of spontaneous liberation of the *Atiyana* is the secret Path; therefore, in this context *Sutrayana*-style Refuge is the outer Refuge, *Vajrayana*-style Refuge is the inner Refuge, and *Atiyana*-style Refuge is the secret Refuge.

⁴⁴¹ The Refuge of the Path of renunciation only lasts until our death in the present life, as only the level of body is taken into account—and the level of the body, unlike that of energy, ends up when this life ends.

⁴⁴² I used the Tibetan term *thigle* (*thig-le*) because, as we have seen, it comprises the meaning of the Skt. terms *bindu* (seed-essence) and *kundalini* (energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness). Though the term *cum* implies that it is *the one plus the other*, the fact that the two Sanskrit terms are translated by the same Tibetan word shows quite clearly that *bindu* and *kundalini* are not two different things that may be put together, but a single functional reality.

It must be noted that according to an ampler interpretation of the term *thigle*, the whole of the “physical” world is made out of *thigle*. Since *thigle* is energy, this interpretation is remindful of Einstein’s Field Theory. (However, Einstein’s theory may be interpreted as assuming that there is an objectively existing universe external to the individual, which is not the case in the Dzogchen teachings: though they also posit

the Base as an objective reality, they do not assert the universe to exist objectively as a reality that is external to the individual.)

⁴⁴³ Skt., *pranavayu* (combination of the terms *vayu* and *prana*); Tib., lung (*rlung*). It has been stated that these energetic “winds” carry “red and white” drops along the structural pathways called tsa (*rtsa*) (discussed in the immediately following note), and that the ovum and the sperm are the gross referents of these “drops.” This should not be understood literally: the “winds” do not carry drops of different colors, and if they are said to do so this is a symbolic statement of the kind proper to the Tantric Path of transformation. The point is that it is the thigle (*thig-le*) energy discussed in the preceding note that, in a polarized form, is said to circulate through the “structural pathways” called tsa (*rtsa*: see following note for a consideration of the mode of existence of these pathways) as the different types of lung (*rlung*). Since, as we have seen, the energetic-volume-determining-the-scope-of-awareness called *kundalini* or thigle is directly related to retention of the thigles or bindus consisting in the ovum and the sperm, one pole of the energy called thigle is symbolically represented by the color of sperm and the other pole is represented by that of menstrual blood. Furthermore, some particular experiences associated with these colors are directly related to the subtle energetic winds. (The translation of the terms thigle and *bindu* as “drop” is related to the fact that both semen when ejected and menstrual blood when it oozes out, do so as drops, and to the fact that those terms also mean “sphere:” as we have seen, they also designate the luminous spheres that can manifest when one closes ones eyes in the dark, when one looks at the sky or, in a much more vivid, total and impressive manner, in practices like Thögel.)

In terms of the interpretation according to which the whole universe is made out of thigle, which in a previous note was compared to Einstein’s Field Theory, all moving patterns of this constituting energy may be referred to as lung, and all structures associated with or generated by these moving patterns may be referred to as tsa. (Though in note before last I compared this interpretation to Einstein’s Field Theory, I warned that the Dzogchen teachings posit the Base as an objective reality, but do not assert the universe to exist objectively as a reality external to the individual.)

⁴⁴⁴ Skt., *nadi*; Tib., tsa (*rtsa*). These are not materially existing channels, but possible structure-functions of the circulation of energy. In fact, Rigdzin Changchub Dorje (*Rig-'dzin Byang-chub rDo-rje*), root teacher of Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu, asserted that the fact that these structural pathways are not physical channels is proven by the fact that different Tantras describe their structure differently, and yet the practices taught in the different Tantras are effective in producing their respective results.

As stated in the preceding note, in terms of the interpretation according to which the whole of reality is made out of thigle, the tsa correspond to the structurings of reality.

⁴⁴⁵ As stated in a previous note, the state free from delusion in which the nondual primordial gnosis that is the Base has become evident is designated in the Dzogchen teachings by the term *rigpa* (*rig-pa*), which corresponds to the Sanskrit *vidya*, and which I translate in this book as “Awake awareness” (insofar as it refers to the patency of *semnyi* [*sems-nyid*], which is best translated as “nature of mind,” “essence of mind,” or “Base Awareness,” and which is the essential awareness that is the Base of all experiences of *samsara* and *nirvana*), as Presence (the term is capitalized to make it clear that it should not be understood in the dualistic Platonic sense of “being before”, for it is an absolute Presence beyond dualism rather than the dualistic, relative presence of some entity), or as “Truth” (in the sense of absence of error or delusion), according to the case. As stated in a previous note, the Master Namkhai Norbu generally translates the same term as “Knowledge,” which in translations of his teachings I write with a capital letter in order to contrast its meaning with the one the word has in ordinary language, which corresponds to its dualistic etymology (as we have seen, according to Paul Claudel, knowledge [*la connaissance*] is the co-birth [*la co-naissance*] of the subject and the object—which clearly refers to the state characterized by dualism and delusion).

For a more exhaustive explanation of the reasons why I translate the term *rigpa* by three different English words, the reader may refer to the relevant note to the Chapter on the Path of spontaneous liberation.

⁴⁴⁶ As we have seen repeatedly, when the three Paths are taken into account, the Path of renunciation of the *Sutrayana* is the outer Path, the Path of transformation of the *Vajrayana* is the inner Path, and the Path of spontaneous liberation of the *Atiyana* is the secret Path; therefore, in this context *Sutrayana*-style Refuge is the outer Refuge, *Vajrayana*-style Refuge is the inner Refuge, and *Atiyana*-style Refuge is the secret Refuge.

⁴⁴⁷ I have used the term “element of Refuge” rather than “object of Refuge” insofar as the word “object” could not be validly applied to the condition that is free from the subject-object duality.

⁴⁴⁸ In Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 102, Padmasambhava's words were translated with the phrase "gompa should be based on experience;" however, the great Master of Oddiyana did not mean that gompa should be based on dualistic, conditioned appearances that veil our true condition (which as we have seen is the meaning of the word "experience"), but on the continuity of the direct, nondual unveiling of the latter condition.

⁴⁴⁹ Concepts are limits insofar as they automatically and by their own nature: (1) include whatever they refer to into a higher-level, larger category (*genus proximum*), and (2) exclude a category or set of categories of the same level and extension (*differentiam specificam*). These limits are represented by corners insofar as corners confine space (just like concepts create limits), and the absence of limits is represented by circles, spheres and so on, insofar as such geometrical figures have no corners.

For example, the *dharmakaya* is represented with a circle for *one of same the reasons* why the state of Dzogchen (whether as Base, as Path or as Fruit) is represented by a total sphere (Tib., thigle chenpo [thig-le chen-po]):* because it cannot be confined into concepts. It so happens that the *dharmakaya*, or for that matter the state of Dzogchen *qua* Path or of Dzogchen *qua* Fruit, is the state beyond the delusory valuation of concepts, and therefore it is totally beyond limits (which in terms of the above way of representing reality, means that it is free from corners). Furthermore, the state of Dzogchen *qua* Path or of Dzogchen *qua* Fruit is the unveiling of the Base that is the true condition of ourselves and the universe and that, insofar as it encompasses everything and thus has neither *genus proximum* nor *differentiam specificam*, cannot be cast into the Procrustean bed of concepts. The same is the case with the *dharmakaya*, which insofar as it consists in the direct unveiling of the ngowo (*ngo-bo*) or "essence" aspect of the Base, also cannot be cast into the Procrustean bed of concepts.

*As we have seen, another reason why the totality of reality is represented by a total sphere is because the term thigle refers to the energy that makes up the whole of reality. This is not the place to list all of the reasons why the term "thigle chenpo" is used to refer to the condition of Dzogchen.

⁴⁵⁰ In particular, the Behavior or chöpa (*spyod-pa*) of chö (*gcod*) has always been an excellent catalyst of the practice of Dzogchen. Practitioners of chö traditionally hanged around with outcasts, with lepers (as will be shown in Part Three of this book, the successful practitioners of chö become immune to infectious illnesses) and in general the most despised individuals, and therefore they were object of extremely negative judgments on the side of the respectable members of society and of whoever was not an outcast, a leper and so on. Furthermore, in the case of beginners, the contact with lepers, with septic charnel grounds, with filth and so on, would easily elicit judgments giving rise to apprehension and fear. Since all such things may cause contradiction to turn into conflict, giving rise to unpleasant feelings, anguish and so on, this mode of conduct was an excellent catalyst for the practice of the Path of spontaneous liberation of *Ati Dzogpa Chenpo*.

Likewise, as shown in Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, quite a few of the female lineage-holders of the Dzogchen teachings earned a living as prostitutes. This allowed them not to be confined to a full-time job, and served the same purpose as the behavior of the practitioners of chö (*gcod*) insofar as it made them object of negative judgments on the part of respectable members of society, and forced them to have recurrent contact with sources of contamination and filth.

⁴⁵¹ In his turn, Atisha's guru from Suvarnadwipa (i.e., from Sumatra) known as Dharmakirti or Dharmapala told his excellent disciple:

"So long as there is the slightest grasping [in you], you must [most] carefully observe the law of cause and effect."

⁴⁵² However, in this case the practice may be much simpler than in Tantrism, for rather than visualizing a complete Refuge tree, it may suffice to have one's own teacher in the form of the supreme Master Garab Dorje, lord of all rigdzins, who was historically the source of the Dzogchen *Atiyoga* teachings in their Buddhist form by directly transmitting the effortless single state in which our own primordial condition of total plenitude and perfection (*ati dzogpa chenpo*) is unveiled, and teaching the means to stabilize this unveiling. If one so wishes, to the Master's right (from our perspective, to his left) one may visualize the *deva*, *devata* or yidam (*yi-dam*) one uses most in one's practice, and to his left (from our perspective, to his right) one may visualize the *dakini* or khandro (*mkha'-'gro*) one uses most in one's practice. (If one so wishes, in addition to one's own Master in the form of Garab Dorje and to the *devata* and the *dakini*, one may visualize other teachers, other devatas and other dakinis.)

If one so prefers, one may visualize the image of one's own teacher instead of Garab Dorje's, but this is less common, since it is more difficult to maintain pure vision with regard to a teacher whom we see in a

physical body just like ours, than in respect to a Master whom we have never met in this life and who has a legendary spiritual stature for us. At any rate, if one's own teacher is visualized as the central figure, Garab Dorje should be visualized above his/her head, or in the center of his/her heart, as a symbol of our connection with the Dzogchen lineage through our teacher.

In any case, another difference of this practice with regard to those of Tantrism is that here we consider that *the image of Garab Dorje represents, not only the Master from whom we receive Dzogchen teachings, but the unification of the totality of the vajra Masters that we may have had in our present lifetime, no matter which school, tradition or transmission lineage they may have belonged to.*

⁴⁵³ As we have seen, there are also those pratyekabuddhas who live at a time when there is neither a living *nirmanakaya* Buddha, nor *dharma*, nor *samgha*, and who, nonetheless, attain realization by meditating on the twelve links of interdependent origination. An example of this was given in a previous note.

⁴⁵⁴ As we have seen, according to a *Mahayana* explanation of the outer, inner and secret meaning of the term *samgha*, the outer *samgha* consists of the whole of the Buddhist monks and nuns, the inner *samgha* is constituted by the superior (*arya*) bodhisattvas (i.e., the bodhisattvas who have attained the first *bhumi* and the corresponding third path, but who have not yet reached the eleventh *bhumi* and the corresponding fifth path), and the secret *samgha* is the *nirmanakaya* of Buddha. In this sense, lay superior bodhisattvas not only are counted among those "true helpers of the practice" from whom one receives teachings, information and example, but, moreover, may be helpers of this kind in a more effective way and in a truer sense than monks and nuns.

⁴⁵⁵ *Rig-'dzin*; Skt., *vidyadhara*. As we have seen, the first element of this composite term, which in Tibetan is *rig* (the root syllable of the word *rigpa*) and in Sanskrit is *vidya*, refers to the state of Awake awareness, Presence or Truth corresponding to *nirvana*. In both languages the second element of the term (Tib., *'dzin*; Skt., *dhara*) means "to hold" or "to possess."

Four principal types of *rigdzin* (*rig 'dzin rnam bzhi*) are listed: the *rigdzins* of maturation (*rnam-smin rig-'dzin*), the *rigdzins* of the long life empowerment (*tshe-dbang rig-'dzin*), the *rigdzins* of *Mahamudra* or total symbol (*phyag-chen rig-'dzin*) and the *rigdzins* of spontaneous perfection (*lhun-grub rig-'dzin*). Though there are different types of *rigdzin*, the supreme *rigdzins* are those whose condition corresponds to the etymological meaning of the term: the realized ones who are established in the unveiling of the primordial state transmitted by the Dzogchen teaching and the inner Tantras. In *Atiyoga* *zhitro* (*zhi khro*) terms, *rigdzins* of this type are those who have achieved the nonduality of the peaceful and wrathful deities (for which reason they are visualized between both types of deities in the Tantric-style practice of *zhitro*). (Wrathful deities symbolize the conflict resulting from the manifestation of the aversion known as *dwesha* or *zhedang*, and peaceful ones here represent the state of nonduality in which there is neither conflict nor aversion: see my own explanation of the Dzogchen Menngagde or *Upadeshavarga* as a *lhundrub zhitro*.)

⁴⁵⁶ Fuel for the Guru-yoga is provided by the Master's manifesting apparent contradictions, or reproving and/or berating the disciple, for such occurrences will lead the disciple's contradictions to turn into conflict, potentiating the practice of Guru-yoga. This is so insofar as the disciple's tendency to incur in mental violations of the *samaya* will create a greater awareness of his or her own contradictions, and as these become conflict they will not be liable to be ignored, but will have to be dealt with the Dzogchen way. (It seems important to note that the Master's behavior is not planned, but responds to the needs of disciples and is based on the spontaneous activation of the Master's propensities, which have become skillful means manifesting as vehicles of wisdom.)

⁴⁵⁷ In fact, in the case of some especially gifted or advanced students, the external teacher might even go so far as to offer them instructions that do not correspond to the true meaning of the teaching, in order to determine if they have or have not acquired sufficient confidence in the View so as to point this out, or as to do differently than they are told. Since snakes quite often show themselves as such precisely when they are trying to act like dragons, thereby the teacher may succeed in having the former and latter stand apart and show their true colors. (Snakes symbolize the ego, which always leaves its trail, just as snakes inevitably do by slithering on the earth. Dragons represent Awakening, with its qualities of power and energy, and in this case symbolize the impossibility of determining the mental state of the Awake Ones through their activities: since dragons fly through the skies, they do not leave any tracks, and even as they glide through the skies they cannot be seen, for they hide within a cloud, which moves along with them.)

⁴⁵⁸ Dzogchen Masters teach their students to live without rules: so long as the state of *rigpa* (Awake Awareness, Presence or Truth) is manifest, their behavior flows through the selfless spontaneity of that state; when it is not manifest, their behavior must be based on what is called "the presence of responsible

awareness” (Italian, “*presenza della consapevolezza*”). With regard to the latter, Chögyäl Namkhai Norbu has given in a book on practice that is now of restricted circulation the following examples: responsible awareness is to know that a glass full of poison is indeed full of poison, and that if we drink it we will die or suffer a serious intoxication; presence is not to be distracted, for otherwise even if we know the glass is full of poison we might drink it inadvertently. In this example, drinking the poison represents producing harm, no matter whether the harm is suffered by ourselves or others (the latter being doubly toxic insofar as it harms both those others and ourselves equally).

The statements of Dzogchen Masters arise to cut through the limits established in their students by the delusory valuation-absolutization of thoughts, which constitute a mental prison, rather than being intended to establish either a philosophical viewpoint concerning reality, or a series of norms to follow (which may be illustrated very well by the answers that the *Ch’an* Master Ta-Chu Hui-hai gave a *Tripitaka* Master who tried to ridicule him, cited in Capriles, Elías, electronic publication 2004.) However, in general all that Masters say in order to free their disciples from clinging to laws and to allow them to overcome the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought, is turned into a law by their unrealized disciples. This has been compared to prisoners using the instructions given by a liberator who sneaked into a jail to which they are confined with the intent to allow them to escape, in order to establish a “prison cult” that would keep anyone else from escaping from jail. (In the simile, the liberator manages to help a group of prisoners to escape from jail, and it is after his or her death that those who remain in jail use his teachings to build the prison cult.)

⁴⁵⁹ There are seven sets of *pratimoksha* vows: (1) that of the *bhikshu* or *gelong* (*dge-slong*), for those who have been fully ordained as monks; (2) that of the *bhikshuni* or *gelongma* (*dge-slong-ma*), for those who have been fully ordained as nuns; (3) that of the *shramanera* or *getsül* (*dge-tshul*), for novice monks who have not been fully ordained; (4) that of the *shramaneriika* or *getsülma* (*dge-tshul-ma*), for novice nuns who have not been fully ordained; (5) that of the *upashaka* or *genyen* (*dge-bsnyen*), for laymen; (6) that of the *upashika* or *genyenma* (*dge-bsnyen-ma*), for laywomen, and (7) *shikshamana* or *gelobma* (*dge-slobma*), for nuns who aspire to the vow of *gelongma*. If we also consider the sets of temporal vows for lay practitioners known as *upavasa* or *nyenng* (*bsnyen-gnas*) in the case of the male, and as *upavasi* and *nyenngema* (*bsnyen-gnas-ma*) in the case of the female, but we list them as a single set of vows, there are a total of eight sets of *pratimoksha* vows.

In a different listing of these vows that also enumerates seven of them, that of *shikshamana* or *gelobma* is excluded, and the temporal vows for lay practitioners of the two sexes are listed as one. In this case, when the set of vows of the *gelobma* is added, we have eight sets of vows of the *pratimoksha*.

⁴⁶⁰ I am using the term “ejaculate” in a particularly ample sense. It is universally known that normally the word refers to the emission by males of their seed-essence, and since the seed-essence of females only comes out in menstruation, there is no exact equivalent of ejaculation in their case. However, the analogy between the emission of liquid by females upon vaginal orgasm and the emission of semen by males seemed to justify the use of the term “ejaculation” in the case of women also.

⁴⁶¹ Note 284, written by the author, in Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1999/2001, p. 253, reads:

The terms translated here (as) ‘ascetic practice’ and ‘resolute conduct’ are *dka ’thub* and *brtul zhugs*, respectively. In their regard Rongzompa comments (Tibetan Text 4: p. 265, 5):

“The term *dka ’thub* (asceticism) corresponds to the (Sanskrit) *tapasya*, and means self-sacrifice: a particular conduct in which, wishing to realize the fruit of the supreme qualities, one mortifies one’s body. The word *brtul zhugs* (resolute conduct) instead corresponds to the (Sanskrit) *vrata* and means ‘(to) alter’: a particular conduct in which, wishing to realize the fruit of the supreme qualities, one alters one’s past attitude in order to acquire a new one.”

In Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, Vol. I, p. 277, we read:

“Above all, the distinctive feature of skillful means is that, if one is endowed with the foundation of the View, and practices the discipline of Behavior which directly overpowers the three poisons (ignorance, aversion-fear and attachment-desire) without renouncing them, (one) is not only unfettered but also obtains swiftly the result (that consists in) liberation. If, on the other hand, one who is not so endowed were to practice (this discipline), liberation would not be obtained and there would be a great risk (that he or she may fall) into evil existences, so that there is a great danger, as in the (alchemical use of) mercury* (for the sudden transformation of iron into gold).”

*Note 267, by the translators, in Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, Vol. II, p19, reads:

“Skt., *makshika*. This is a specific kind of mercury that is reputedly employed as a catalyst for the transmutation of iron into gold. Refer to Mipham Rinpoche, *sPyi-don 'od-gsal snying-po*, pp. 48-49.”

⁴⁶² In the ritual known as *ganapuja* (to which reference will be made in Part Three of this book), practitioners are constrained to drink alcohol and eat meat, in spite of the first being absolutely forbidden by the *Vinaya* (the “basket” or section of the *Tripitaka* that regulates conduct on the Path of renunciation and, in particular, in the *Hinayana*) and the second being allowed (and, moreover, being compulsory) only when the meat is put in the begging bowl of a monk or nun (provided that the recipient knows for certain that the animal was not sacrificed with the specific aim of offering him or her the meat, and that the animals involved is not a dog, a viper, a tiger, a bear or a hyena).

Despite the above, a series of *Mahayana* sutras including the *Lankavatara*, the *Surangama*, the *Nirvana*, the *Hastikashya*, the *Mahamegha* and the *Anglimatika* forcefully discourage the consumption of meat and, in many cases, that of other “nonwhite” foods (in terms of the Hindu *guna*, “nonsattvic” foods).

Furthermore, traditionally a Tantric practitioner would have to consume the mixture of menstrual blood and semen that the Master and his or her consort periodically produce in order to provide disciples with the means for maintaining their *samaya*. However, nowadays this and the consumption of other substances such as faeces and urine are not carried out by the bulk of a Tantric Master’s disciples.

⁴⁶³ The state of *Mahamudra* may be attained by means of the practice of the Anuttarayogatantras or by means of the formless practice associated with the Tantric teachings that is also called *Mahamudra*, and which in its formless Tantric form is most widespread in the Kagyü School. The state of *Mahamudra* is the same no matter which way we follow for attaining it; however, the methods whereby it is attained in the practice with form of *Anuttarayogatantra* are very different from those whereby it is attained in the formless practice associated with the Tantric teachings that is called *Mahamudra*.

⁴⁶⁴ Here reference is being made to the meaning of the word when body, energy or voice and mind are spoken of.

⁴⁶⁵ *Thig-le*. We have repeatedly seen that this Tibetan term may translate the Sanskrit word *bindu*, the Sanskrit word *kundalini*, or both of them. In this case it translates the term *bindu* and makes specific reference to the seminal *bindu*; however, it must be clear by now that the reason for keeping the seminal *bindu* is in order to maintain a high *kundalini*.

⁴⁶⁶ The stopping of menstruation is achieved by means of practices of tsa-lung-thigle (*rtsa-rlung-thig le*) associated with *yantra yoga*, and the oral ingestion of a traditional medicine.

⁴⁶⁷ In Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, Note 146 by Adriano Clemente (in p. 275) reads: “The most common classification of the “ten natures of *Tantra*” (*rgyud kyi rang bzhin bcu or rgyud kyi dngos po bcu*) consists of: *lta ba*, *spyod pa*, *dkyil 'khor*, *dbang*, *dam tshig*, *'phrin las*, *sgrub pa*, *ting nge 'dzin*, *mchod pa*, *sngags*. See, for example, the chapter of the *Byang chub kyi sems shes bya mtha' gcod kyi rgyud Tantra* titled *rgyud kyi dngos po bstan pa'i le'u* (*Byang chub kyi sems shes bya mtha' gcod kyi rgyud*, in *rNying-ma rgyud 'bum*, *mTshams brag* edition, vol. Ka, pp. 288-352, Thimpu 1982). The list given by Longchenpa (*You Are the Eyes of the World*, pp. 34-35) has: *lta ba*, *sgom pa*, *dam tshig*, *'phrin las*, *dkyil 'khor*, *dbang*, *sa sbyang ba*, *lam bgrod pa*, *sgrib pa sbyang ba*, *ye shes dam sangs rgyas*. Also see Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, vol. II, p. 164. Sometimes there are variations in the chapters of the *Kun byed rgyal po* and in other *Sems sde* texts also regarding the “ten absences” (*med pa bcu*) that are the true meaning of the ten natures.”

⁴⁶⁸ As stated in a previous note, I write the word “Presence” with a capital letter and add the adjective “nondual” in order to warn the reader that in this case the word is not being used in the etymological, Platonic and Heideggerian sense of “being before” (or “facing”), which implies the subject-object duality (and hence the mutual relativity of these two poles of knowledge), but to refer to the vivid unveiling of our own primordial awareness—or, in other words, of that which has been compared to the reflective capacity of a mirror. This unveiling corresponds to the state of *rigpa* (*rig-pa*): Awake awareness, Presence or Truth.

As stated in a previous note, in the Dzogchen teaching it is essential to distinguish between relative presence or *tenpa*, and nondual, absolute, instant Presence or *rigpa*. A good Dzogchen practitioner must maintain nondual Presence at all times; however, anytime he or she is not able to maintain it, the practitioner must at least maintain relative presence.

The above distinction is closely related to the two modes of practice referred to in the Semde (*sems-sde*) series of Dzogchen teachings, and described in Chapter 67 of the *Kunche Gyälpo*, which are *rejo* (*res 'jog*) and *nyamjog* (*mnyam 'jog*). In Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente, English 1999, p. 126, we read:

“By and large, *rejog* can be rendered (as) “changing level.” If a thought arises which disturbs us, we do not get rid of it. Instead, we notice that this thought is worrying or disturbing us and pursue it a little, observing it: in this way we bring it to the level of presence of (responsible) awareness, as if we were watching a movie, noticing everything that happens without falling into indifference. The aim, evidently, is not the investigation of where the thought ends up, but the achievement of the state of presence of (responsible) awareness. So from the first moment a thought arises, we must not remain indifferent. For example, we might think: “This evening I want to eat that special dish I had yesterday,” after which quite easily the thought could arise: “But I wonder if there is any left or if it’s all been eaten.” However, even if we “allow” ourselves to be transported by the thought a bit, this must always be done with (responsible) awareness, governed by presence.

“*Nyamjog*, on the other hand, means that any thought, good or bad, that arises, whatever disturbing factor occurs, we do not judge it but instead remain, in that very instant, in (the thought’s) own (true) condition: in this way we allow it to disappear by itself. So in this case we do not undertake to observe what is happening: if a thought arises, instantaneously we leave it in the authentic condition. In this way the thought disappears (into the sea of which it was a nothing but an apparent wave, allowing the patency of the sea to remain).

“This is the fundamental difference between *rejog* and *nyamjog*, but is it necessary to practice *rejog*? The principle of the practice of spontaneous liberation is based on *nyamjog*, and true practitioners apply it much more than *rejog*. Nevertheless, the practice of *rejog* is necessary for people who do not have sufficient clarity, or who are unable to find the level of Presence / Awake awareness (in a) precise (manner).”

In particular, *rejog* is most useful for people who are not fully Awake and who are living in society, with all the responsibilities involved in their job, family and so on. So long as we are in *rejog*, we are maintaining relative presence. And relative presence, applied in a different way, is also the necessary condition of *nyamjog*. However, as soon as *nyamjog* works, resulting in spontaneous liberation, we find ourselves in the state of nondual, absolute, instant Presence or *rigpa*, with no traces of relative presence.

⁴⁶⁹ In *Anuyoga* four aspects of the *samaya* commitment are also spoken of that imply something similar to the four *mepa*: (1) there are no limits to abide by because the essence of the supreme commitment is freedom with respect to transgressions and violations; (2) there is total equality and equanimity because the subject-object duality has been overcome; (3) there is nothing more than the expanse of the nature of mind; (4) the state of *rigpa* or Truth is never abandoned. Cf. Tibetan Text 11, B: vol. 2, p. 189; quoted in Dudjom Rinpoche, English 1991, Vol. II, p. 138.

⁴⁷⁰ In fact, if we judge the Master and/or other practitioners we will be violating the Dzogchen *samaya*, which requires us to continue uninterruptedly in the state of *rigpa* (Awake awareness, Presence or Truth) beyond judgments and all types of dualism. For this reason, this *samaya* with the Master is not totally apart from the Dzogchen *samaya* requiring us to be in the state of *rigpa* beyond judgments and dualism—which as we have seen is violated by the dualistic attempt to keep one’s various *samayas* or commitments.

⁴⁷¹ The ten nonvirtuous actions are the most general actions to be avoided by Buddhists. They comprise three actions that are carried out with the body, four that are carried out with the voice, and three that are carried out with the mind. In Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1991/2001, pp. 55-56, we read:

“The ten nonvirtuous actions include three actions related to the body: 1. Killing. 2. Stealing. 3. Sexual misconduct (in the case of ordained persons this means indulging in sexual intercourse, and in the case of lay people indulging in those forms of sexual conduct that may be harmful to others or that are ruled out by their respective precepts).

“Four actions related to the voice: 4. Lying. 5. Slandering. 6. Insulting. 7. Speaking in vain.

“Three actions related to the mind: 8. Craving other people’s property. 9. Malevolence. 10. Upholding an erroneous view (the most important erroneous view being not believing in the law of cause and effect of *karma*).”

Other forbidden actions are: the five actions with immediate result, the five actions near to those with immediate result, the four groups of four heavy actions each, and the eight contrary actions. Cf. Namkhai Norbu [Chögyäl], 1991/2001, pp. 54-62.