

Nondual awareness, dualistic consciousness, and the path to absolute sanity

Consciencia no-dual, consciencia dual y
el camino hacia la cordura absoluta

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Abstract

A nondual awareness is the base of (1) *saṃsāra*'s dualistic consciousness, (2) *nirvāṇa*'s nondual awareness, and (3) the neutral base-of-all. Transpersonal or holotropic states may be found in any of these three conditions, yet transpersonal theorists fail to discriminate among them. There are no good or bad BPMs, for the most conflictive conditions may offer the best opportunities for liberation. The Path to Absolute Sanity begins with dys-morphogenesis or exaggeration of wayward patterns by means of positive feedback, which then is interrupted by a "metamorphic breakthrough" that turns it into eu-morphogenesis, where positive feedback constantly leads exaggerated wayward patterns to spontaneous liberation.

Key words: *Svasamvedana*, Dzogchen, Grof, Transpersonal, Spiritual emergency.

Resumen

Una Gnitividad¹ no dual es la Base de (1) la conciencia dualista del *saṃsāra*, (2) la Gnitividad no dual del *nirvāṇa* y (3) la base-neutra-de-todo. Los estados transpersonales y holotrópicos pueden pertenecer a cualquiera de estas tres condiciones, pero los teóricos transpersonales no distinguen entre ellas. No hay MPBs buenas ni malas, pues los estados más conflictivos pueden ofrecer las mejores oportunidades para la liberación: el Sendero a la Absoluta Cordura comienza con dys-morfogénesis o exageración de pautas díscolas por medio de realimentación positiva, que luego es interrumpida por una "ruptura metamórfica" que la transforma en eu-morfogénesis, en la que la realimentación positiva constantemente lleva las pautas díscolas exageradas a su liberación espontánea.

Palabras clave: *Svasamvedana*, Dzogchén, Grof, Transpersonal, Emergencia espiritual.

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The view concerning consciousness and awareness posited here coincides with the one expressed in Fr. 2 DK of Heraclitus in claiming that all cognitions and actions, rather than being the functions of an individual, separate and autonomous dual,thetic, positional, reflexive consciousness, are the play of a nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional, nonreflexive awareness—the latter being the manifestation of the universal Heraclitian λόγος/lógos in human beings (so to speak). Sartre (1980) attributed powers to being-for-Self (*être-pour-soi*: the being of dualistic consciousness) among which most characteristic is the one he referred to as a “nihilating power” (according to Sartre, being-for-Self arises as a nihilation of being-in-itself; likewise, the nihilating power in question nihilates the ground so that the figure may be perceived as an inherently separate entity—and so on) and a series of other powers; however, in terms of the view of consciousness and awareness posited here all such powers belong to, and are functions of, the nondual awareness inherent in that which Sartre called the Self (*Soi*) as I have redefined it (Capriles, 2007, vol. I, work in progress 1)². In fact, although primordial nondual awareness manifests the illusory subject-object schism and the delusive dualistic functioning that ensues, *in itself* the awareness in question (is) nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional and nonreflexive—and so the schism and functioning in question may be compared unto the perception of falling hairs by a bald man suffering from floaters (*muscae volitantes*).

Long before Sartre, certain Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophers regarded awareness of consciousness as the condition of possibility of remembrance; according to Paul Williams (1998, p. 9), this was the case *at least* since, in *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 1:11d, Dignāga (480-540 CE) stated that whenever we have a memory of having seen the aspect of blue we also have the memory of having had ourselves the experience of seeing this aspect (i.e., that having the memory of the aspect of blue implies having the memory of *having been conscious of* this aspect)—which implies that, at the time when the perception of the aspect of blue occurred, it was accompanied by an awareness (of) being conscious of seeing the aspect of blue. Dignāga’s disciple, Dharmakīrti, asserted that for perception to be possible there had to be awareness that one is perceiving. Beginning with Śāntarakṣita, those Buddhist philosophers who subsequently upheld this thesis substantiated it by asserting that without awareness (of) consciousness (i.e. if there were no awareness that one is conscious of whatever one is conscious of) there would be insentience: since stones do not know, they are not aware that they know, but all beings that know have awareness (of) their knowing (note that, as Paul Williams [1998] has shown, whenever Prajñākaramati [in Śāntideva, 1960] and Mokṣākaragupta [1985] referred to the fact that awareness [of] consciousness is the reverse of insentience, they quoted Śāntarakṣita’s *Madhyamakālamkāravṛtti*).

In Western philosophy, Descartes used *apercevoir* for awareness of perception (Descartes, 1969, I:19). Leibniz distinguished between perception, which represents a multitude in unity or in a simple substance, and apperception, which corresponded to consciousness, and criticized Descartes for failing to account for the confuse and obscure perceptions monads have in stunned states (Kulstad, 1991). Then Kant (1966, A:107) used the term to refer to the awareness that one is perceiving (characteristically divided into “empirical” and “pure”—the former being the actual one and the latter the former’s condition of possibility). After Descartes and before Leibniz, Spinoza (1957) had already introduced the concept of an *idea ideæ* to refer to “knowledge of knowledge.” However, possibly the first European philosopher who asserted that *for perception to be possible at all there had to be awareness of the fact that one is perceiving* was Alain (Emile-Auguste Chartier). And yet, like the above Eastern philosophers, Alain failed to note that awareness of consciousness had to be what Sartre called “nonthetic, nonpositional consciousness (of) consciousness” and which I reworded as “nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional, nonreflexive awareness (of) a mental subject that is the core of dualistic, thetic, positional, potentially reflexive conscious[ness] of objects” (Capriles, 2007 vol. I).

Thus Sartre’s thesis is that consciousness is made possible by a nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional awareness, yet the awareness in question (as the parentheses he puts around the proposition “of” inform us) does not take consciousness as object: the latter manifests in nondual awareness as a reflection in a mirror or

an image in a LCD screen—i.e., without seeming to be separate, or to lie at a distance from, nondual awareness. This is a true philosophical feat, for although the concept was implicit in the Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*) teachings—which compare nondual primordial awareness with a mirror in which, while *samsāra* is manifest, subject and object arise and dissolve with each and every cognition—to my knowledge no one before Sartre, East or West, expressed this concept in philosophical terms³. Furthermore, the French philosopher provided us with the basis for producing the *missing explanation* of the spontaneous awareness of consciousness / perception (Skt. *svasamvittiḥ*; Tib. *rang rig*) that is implicit in Dignāga and explicit in Dharmakīrti, as understood by Śāntarākṣita and his successors (and especially by Mahāmādhyaṃaka), and removed the grounds for the objections successively raised by Mādhyamika-Prāsaṅgika philosophers (Capriles, 2004).

The teachings of the Dzogchen Semde (*rdzogs chen sems sde*) note that a mirror—which illustrates nondual awareness—cannot judge reflections in order to accept some of them and reject others, for they are not at a distance from the mirror and the latter cannot experience them as separate from itself. However, when the arising and *reification* (in the sense of what I call delusory valuation / absolutization of thought)⁴ of the supersubtle thought called *threefold thought structure* (Skt. *trimaṇḍala*; Tib. *'khor gsum*: a directional, intentional thought structure that conceives a subject-that-is, an experience/action-that-is, and an object-that-is) gives rise to the appearance of a separate mental subject or noetic pole of experience and action that seems to be the source of the [co]gnitive capacity and motility of nondual awareness, and with it the dualistic, positional, thetic, reflexive consciousness that has the mental subject as its core comes into being, all experience has to fit into the resulting dualistic structure. Hence in spite of the fact that neither the mental subject nor the object—or, in Husserlian terminology, the *νόημα/nóema*—are external to, or at a distance from, the mirror, dualistic consciousness experiences the object as separate and different from itself, and is compelled to assess it in order to dualistically determine whether to accept it, reject it or remain indifferent to it. As shown in Capriles (2003, 2004, 2007), the object's acceptance gives rise to a pleasant sensation that is wrongly taken as the proof that the object has an objective, positive value; its rejection produces an unpleasant sensation that is taken as the proof that the object has an objective, negative value; and indifference to it begets a neutral sensation that is taken as the proof that the object has an objective, neutral value. Hence the subject constantly ascends and descends in experience, revolving in *samsāra* (literally, the “wheel”).

On the contrary, when the illusory mental subject and the concomitant dualistic, positional, thetic, reflexive consciousness dissolves as *nirvāṇa* manifests, and only nondual awareness remains, there can be no judging, intending, wanting or being ashamed. It is therefore natural that Sartre (1980, p. 19) noted with regard to nonthetic, nonpositional, nonreflexive awareness that, “the immediate awareness that I have of perceiving does not allow me to judge, to want, or to be ashamed...” And that the Tibetan yogi Milarepa said that, “This Path of Milarepa is such that one is never ashamed of oneself.”

Nevertheless, since Sartre never had any realization of *nirvāṇa*, he *implied* that nondual, nonreflexive, nonthetic, nonpositional awareness was *always and necessarily*, (a) nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional awareness (of) *dualistic, thetic, positional consciousness* of object, and (b) nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional awareness (of) *being*. Had *nirvāṇa* manifested in his continuum at least once, he would have had the certainty that this is not the case, for in *nirvāṇa* nondual spontaneous awareness no longer manifests *either*, (a) a dual, thetic, positional consciousness, *or* (b) the phenomenon of being. Moreover, he would have realized dual, thetic, positional consciousness and the phenomenon of being to be produced by the reification of the threefold thought-structure (the directional, intentional thought structure that conceives a subject-that-is, an experience/action-that-is, and an object-that-is). In fact, dualistic consciousness: (1) rather than being inherent in nondual awareness, arises when the reification of the supersubtle threefold thought structure makes the mental subject—an illusory, incorporeal phenomenon—manifest in nondual awareness co-emergently with the phenomenon of being that makes the subject in question appear to involve self-being

(upon which, as noted above, the [co]gnitive capacity and motility of nondual awareness seems to lie in this subject, which seems to be a separate perceiver of experiences, thinker of thought and doer of action)—so that the mental subject appears to be an individual, separate, autonomous, self-existing dualistic, thetic, positional, often reflexive consciousness; (2) together with the *phenomenon of being*⁵, is the core of the basic human delusion (Skt. *avidyā*; Tib. *ma rig pa*) at the root of unhappy consciousness (*duḥkha*); and (3) can dissolve in *nirvāṇa*, bringing to an end the unhappy consciousness inherent in it.

In fact, in this nondual awareness three ways of functioning are possible (Capriles, 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007 vol. 2, 2001, work in progress 1, work in progress 2): (1) One in which it fully reveals its true condition in a nondual, nonconceptual way, and in which its inherent freedom is unrestricted, which the Dzogchen teachings refer to as *rang rig* (Skt. *svasamvedana*)—a term that, when used in this characteristically Dzogchen sense, I render as spontaneous Awake awareness—and which is the most complete, perfect type of *nirvāṇa*⁶. (2) One in which the true condition in question is concealed by an element of stupefaction that in Tibetan is called *rmongs cha*, which the Dzogchen teachings refer to by the Tibetan word *kun gzhi* (Skt. *ālaya*), and in which neither *nirvāṇa* nor *samsāra* are active (*samsāra* being inactive because the subject-object duality has not yet manifested). (3) The one called *samsāra*, in which there is dualistic consciousness of object, and which involves *svasamvedana* or *svasamvittiḥ* (Tib. *rang rig*) in the radically different sense of the term given it by Mahāyāna Master Dharmakīrti following his teacher Dignāga (e.g., Williams, 1998): that of the dualistic reflexive consciousness that since Descartes (1969), Leibniz (1986) and especially Kant (1966), has been called *apperception*—which, in my redefined (Capriles, 2007 vol. I) Sartrean (1980) terminology, may be defined as nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional, nonreflexive awareness (of) a dualistic, thetic, positional consciousness of object, and which in ordinary beings follows the manifestation of the already mentioned element of stupefaction in the state called *kun gzhi*. The subject-object duality, and with it active *samsāra*, arises as a formless (Skt. *ārūpa*) condition not involving the figure/ground distinction, which is followed by a state of form (Skt. *rūpa*) involving the figure/ground distinction, and which is finally followed by a sensual (Skt. *kāma*) condition that involves a passionate response toward the figure. (For a discussion of the latter sense of the term *svasamvedana*, which nonetheless the authors fail to clarify, cf. Williams, 1998, and Pettit, 1999, among others; a brief discussion of both senses is available in the “rigpa” entry of Wikipedia.)

In terms of the simile of the mirror and the reflected, which may be complemented with that of an LCD screen and the images it manifests, the above may be illustrated by saying that, whereas in the mirror or LCD screen there is no distance between the reflective or image-producing capacity and the reflected / produced images, in *samsāra* an image that occupies no space and that hence has neither form nor color, which is commonly called the mental subject and which in Husserl’s fatally Cartesian system (1977, in its definitive form 1982) may be said to be the noetic pole of the noetic-noematic complex, *seems to be* at a distance from the continuum of spatial reflections, and thus unremittingly experiences the lack of the plenitude proper to that continuum—as well as recurrent conflict, for it is bound to reject some of the spatial reflections that manifest. (Since affections are not permanent, Sartre’s assertion that there is no pre-existing consciousness that at some point receives an affection implies the Buddhist view according to which in each cognition consciousness—which in this case is the apparent dualistic, thetic, positional, reflexive consciousness—*arises* as consciousness of this or that.) In *nirvāṇa*—which is not impermanent, as it is the uncaused patency of primordial nondual, nonthetic, nonpositional, nonreflexive awareness, which does not arise or cease, and (is) uninterrupted and continuous, and free of the four characteristics of the conditioned⁷—the nonspatial image that the mental subject is has dissolved and therefore there is plenitude and lack of conflict, as well as an unrestricted freedom of the motility of awareness. Finally, in *kun gzhi* the nonspatial image does not manifest, yet the true condition of the mirror / LCD screen is concealed, clouded or fogged up by *rmongs cha*, whereas its motility is arrested.

(1) *Nirvāṇa* is a transpersonal, fully holistic, atemporal, non-transient condition; (2) *kun gzhi* is a

transpersonal, nearly holistic, transient condition; and (3) the samsaric formless realms, in which the figure / ground dichotomy does not manifest, yet there is a subject-object duality and the subject identifies with the totality appearing as object, taking pride in being a totality, or in being a condition that is conceptualized as so absolutely inconceivable and indescribable as not to be liable to be conceived as inconceivable or to be described as indescribable, etc., are transpersonal, holotropic, temporal, transient conditions (different types of concepts with which the subject identifies giving rise to the four formless realms of Buddhism). Thus it is clear that most transpersonal and holotropic states are *not* Awakening, liberation, *nirvāṇa* or what I refer to as absolute sanity.

In fact, whereas *samsāra* is marred by an unremitting lack of plenitude and by recurring conflict and pain, *kun gzhi* is a condition that in ordinary people is as a rule followed by the manifestation of *samsāra* and in which one's lifetime is squandered without one having any chance of achieving the plenitude, freedom and consummateness of *nirvāṇa*. Hence the need for us to undertake the transition from *samsāra* to *nirvāṇa*, which, the way it occurs in the practice of Dzogchen, I have explained in terms of systems theory as beginning with an initial stage of dys-morphogenesis / *wayward self-organization* in which wayward patterns are exacerbated by means of positive feedback, and which on reaching a given threshold is interrupted by a *metamorphic breakthrough* that turns *dys-morphogenesis / wayward self-organization* into *eu-morphogenesis* or *wholesome self-organization* and, beyond this, into what I have christened *metamorphrhesis*—wherein positive feedback loops constantly lead exacerbated wayward patterns to their spontaneous liberation, thus rapidly neutralizing the propensities for the manifestation of delusion and hence of *samsāra*. (The neologism *metamorphic breakthrough* was chosen because, each and every time spontaneous liberation takes place, it results in temporary freedom from conditioning by programs and metaprograms and hence from fixed forms or patterns; in its turn, the term *metamorphrhesis* is compounded by the Greek vocables *μετα/meta*, meaning “beyond” or “change;” *μορφή/morphé*, meaning “structure,” “configuration” or “form;” and *ῥήσος/rhésos*, meaning “flow”.)

No transpersonal system either seeks or achieves the above. Stan Grof (1985), for example, gets clients to revive what he calls perinatal matrices (BPMs)—which may seem to correspond to stages of the *bar do* (Skt. *antarābhava*), and which, just as the latter, could be seen as expressions of a human constant that manifests in different contexts. However, as stages in the process of birth they all involve inborn *avidyā* of the type called *rmongs cha*—which as noted above obscures the true condition of nondual awareness and, with it, the true condition of ourselves and the whole universe—and most of them also involve incipient *avidyā* in the sense of dualism and delusion (i.e., as the core of *samsāra*), together with a propensity to develop this dualism and delusion into the passions of the samsaric realm of sensuality (*kāmaloka* or *kāmadhātu*). Furthermore, though Grof divides BPMs and varieties of BPMs into “good” and “bad,” none of them is supremely good, as none of them is Awakening or *nirvāṇa*, and none of them is in itself bad, as bad BPMs may offer the best opportunities for the spontaneous occurrence of a leap forward on the Path of Awakening. For example, BPM 1 is an instance of *kun gzhi* where the human lifetime is squandered, and, moreover, in ordinary people it is as a rule followed by a formless (*ārūpa*) condition that is the first stage in the development of *samsāra*—i.e., of the illness affecting all sentient beings—and that is a transient samsaric condition that may be followed by a state of great suffering, for the re-establishment of the ordinary tunnel-like, fragmented consciousness is likely to elicit a claustrophobic reaction of forceful rejection—which, since at the moment the energetic-volume-that-determines-the-scope-of-awareness (Skt. *kuṇḍalinī*; Tib. *thig le*) may be quite high, thus preventing the shielding of pain, is likely to give rise to a hellish experience. Therefore, it would be wrong to believe that in itself BPM 1 is good. And it would be equally wrong to believe that in themselves BPMs 2 and 3 are bad: in some of what the Grofs (1992) call *spiritual emergencies*, they may be the antechamber of a sudden release of conflict in the transition to a BPM 4 or a death-and-rebirth episode that, though it does not lead to *nirvāṇa*, may reduce traumas and neuroses, as well as the propensity to develop tensions and conflict, and help the person open up to transpersonal realms, thus

having a relative healing power; in the context of Dzogchen practice, they may be the antechamber of the metamorphic interruption referred to above, which is the beginning of the process of *metamorphrhesis* that may result in Awakening. In fact, BPMs 2 and 3 develop through wayward positive feedback, and then the transition to BPM 4 is partly analogous to the spontaneous liberation of delusion that results from the development of wayward patterns in *metamorphrhesis*—yet in birth or in the bardo there is no self-liberation of delusion in *nirvāṇa* and hence the analogy is far from being a correspondence: BPM 4 is utterly different from the manifestation of *rang rig* (spontaneous Awake awareness) that goes along with the spontaneous liberation of delusion in Dzogchen practice. However, many other types of the spiritual emergencies listed by the Grofs (1992) have no healing potential whatsoever and should not be lumped together with potentially liberating ones.

As to the frequent equation by transpersonal authors of traditions of Awakening (including Buddhism in general and Dzogchen in particular) with shamanism, and Grof's characterization of all shamanic experiences as transpersonal, it is important to note that shamanic experiences that fit Michael Harner's (1973) definition of shamanism—those in which the nonordinary reality to which access is gained through shamanic means is viewed as the true reality, whereas ordinary experience is seen as illusory—are chains of bondage that make us depend on the whims of spiritual entities over which we have no control. In fact, when Paths of Awakening induce experiences to some extent similar to those induced by shamanism, the purpose of so doing is to give the practitioner an opportunity to apply pith instructions that facilitate the *reGnition* of the true condition of both the experience and the experiencer, so that dualistic, deluded experience liberates itself spontaneously (in the term *reGnition* the particle “co” was deleted because in this event the subject-object duality and the interpretation of sense data in terms of concepts termed *recognition* do not occur). The idea is that, as a result of the constant repetition of this, the *karma* at the root of the emotions will be gradually neutralized, so that in the long run the practitioner will cease taking *both nonordinary and ordinary experiences* as absolutely true and important, will become immune to the influence of both human beings and what is perceived as demons, elementals and so on—and, at the end, will become established in nondual, nonabiding, nonconceptual *nirvāṇa*, becoming utterly free from the sufferings of *saṃsāra*. This is the central function of the Tibetan practice of *gcod*, in which yogis offer their bodies to demons and evil elementals, and through a conjunction of causes and conditions bring forth a dreadful visionary experience in which those entities attack and devour them—which they then use as the occasion for applying pith instructions that may result in the *reGnition* of the true condition of the experience and the latter's spontaneous liberation. As a result of the repetition of this liberation, in the long run the individual no longer takes any reality—ordinary or shamanic—to be self-existing: in the Contemplation state (Skt. *samāhita*; Tib. *mnyam bzhag*) there is no confusing conceptualization and hence no subject-object duality, and in post-Contemplation (Skt. *prṣṭhalabdha*; Tib. *rjes thob*) all types of reality are seen as having the same status as illusions—and so the practitioner becomes immune to the power of all types of reality to affect his or her mind. And, finally, dualistic consciousness of object arises no more and irreversible Awakening obtains.

In fact, the Awakening of Buddhas is not a dualistic, conceptually-tainted condition of the kind Stan Grof (1985) calls hylotropic, but a condition free from the subject-object duality and from the element of stupefaction called *rmongs cha*; the condition Grof posits as ideal fruit of therapy is proper to the post-Contemplation state of the less advanced bodhisattvas, yogis and so on—yet it can only result from the repeated occurrence of the Contemplation state that is an instance of nonabiding *nirvāṇa* and that as such is free from the subject-object duality and from the element of stupefaction called *rmongs cha*: it cannot result from the mere reliving of BPMs.

As to Stan Grof's (1985) comparison of the present world situation with a BPM 3, I think it is very much to the point, as in terms of the ancient Eurasian view of spiritual and social evolution we are near the threshold at which the *kaliyuga* (Era of Darkness) may be replaced by a new *kṛtayuga* (Age of Perfection) / *satyayuga* (Age of Truth)—or, this time, by the Millennium of the *Kālacakratāntra*, the *Apocalypse* or the

corresponding Ismaili prophecies. The point is that the last period of a *kaliyuga* develops very much like a BPM 3 to the threshold at which the latter may be replaced by a BPM 4—except in that, if the transition in question is to initiate a new *kr̥tayuga* / *satyayuga* or a Millennium of Wisdom, fulfillment, harmony, integration with the ecosystem, equality and peace, it must not be reduced to the switching from BPM 3 to BPM 4. In fact, for this to occur, the transition must be catalyzed by the traditions of Awakening, so that the self-resolution of the BPM 3 may involve the spontaneous liberation of delusion in the spontaneous Awake awareness or *rang rig* that makes the true condition of ourselves and all reality patent (Capriles, 2007 vol. 3, in press 1, in press 2, in press 3).

The discussion of nondual awareness, dualistic consciousness and the phenomenon of being is carried out at length in Capriles (2004) and then in Capriles (2007, vol. I). The discussion of the transition from *samsāra* to *nirvāṇa* in terms of systems theory is carried out in Capriles (2007, vol. II; work in progress 3). And that of the degenerative philosophy of history is carried out in Capriles (1994; 2007, vol. III; work in progress 1). The reader is hereby invited to examine those books, which are provisionally posted at the URL <http://www.webdelprofesor.ula.ve/humanidades/elicap/>

Footnotes

1.- In English there is the term *cognitiveness* but not so the term *Gnitiveness*, whereas in Spanish the neologism “cognitividad” may be readily accepted, but not so the term “Gnitividad.” The point in introducing these neologisms in these two and in other Western languages is that cognitiveness/cognitividad involves the prefix *co*, which implies the duality of subject and object, which as shown in this paper is not inherent in what I call Gnitiveness/Gnitividad, as they arise with *samsāra*. In fact, as Paul Claudel (1943) made it clear in his *Traité de la co-naissance au monde et de soi-même*, knowledge (French, *connaissance*) involves the co-emergence (*co-naissance*) of subject and object—and it is clear that the same applies to the English cognitiveness and the Spanish neologism *cognitividad*.

2.- By redefining Sartre’s concept of Self (*Soi*) as a synonym of *rdzogs-chen*, so that it does not contradict that of *anātman* (Pāli, *anattā*), and modifying some of his explanations as I have done in other works (Capriles, 2007, vol. I, work in progress 1), his system becomes Buddhist.

3.- The simile of the mirror is traditionally used in the Nature-of-mind or Semde (*sems sde*) series of Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*) teachings.

4.- What here I am calling reification of thought is what as a rule I refer to as the *delusory valuation / absolutization of thought*, which is at the root of the mix-up that characterizes *samsāra*, and which consists in the process whereby a vibratory function that seems to emanate from, or be concentrated in, the center of the chest at the level of the heart, *charges* thoughts with the illusion of *value* and *truth*, causing us to either, (a) experience their contents as self-existing entities, as happens with that supersubtle thought which is the mental subject, (b) confuse them with the territory they interpret and take them to be entities-in-themselves, as occurs in sensory perception, or (c) be the absolute truth—or something absolutely false—about what the thoughts interpret, as happens in discursive thinking (for a more detailed consideration of the term “delusory valuation / absolutization,” see Capriles (1994, 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2004, and in particular 2007, vol. I). When the delusory valuation-absolutization of thought becomes stronger, and hence the sensation in the center of the chest associated with the vibratory function at the root of delusion (Skt. *vedanā*; Tib. *tshor ba*, which is rendered as “mental sensation”) becomes more perceptible and the impulses to act in specific ways become more powerful, it is said that one is being affected by a *passion* (Skt. *kleśa*; Tib. *nyon mongs*)—and yet it is generally held that (b) the confusion of subtle thoughts with singled out segments of the sensory continuum, which implies that the subject is experienced as a truly existing self and the segment of the sensory continuum is experienced as a self-existent entity of this or that kind, is already the obstacle of passions (Skt. *kleśavarāṇa*; Tib. *nyon sgrib*, as different from *jñeyāvarāṇa* or *shes sgrib*). Cf. Capriles (2000a, 2003, work in progress) for a definition and their relationship with the second and third aspects of *avidyā* in the Dzogchen classification favored by Longchen Rabjampa.

So far the term *supersubtle thought* has been used thrice, and hence it is necessary to define what these thoughts are—which must be done in relation to *subtle thoughts* and *coarse thoughts*, as these three are the classes of thought distinguished in the Dzogchen teachings and other inner Vajrayāna teachings. In my version of these concepts, coarse thoughts are the reproduction of sense-data

by the imagination on the basis of memory (and as such they may correspond to what David Hume called ideas); since discursive thoughts are the reproduction by the imagination of the sounds of words, in such a way as to form inner dialogues serving as the basis for conveying chains of meaning, they are a variety of this type of thoughts (this goes *far* beyond Hume's concept of ideas; moreover, the explanation given in the discussion of subtle thoughts according to which these thoughts repeatedly occur in discursive thinking and are responsible for our understanding of what discursive thinking says, is foreign to Hume's system, for he did not posit subtle thoughts—this being perhaps the main weakness of his system, whereas that of the whole of Western philosophy and epistemology is not to posit supersubtle thoughts). Subtle thoughts are the mute comprehension of sense data or of their reproduction by the imagination in the form of coarse thoughts (and as such they may correspond to what different Continental philosophers called concepts), and hence they are responsible, among other things, for (a) what Descartes, Locke and other Western philosophers and epistemologists called “intuitive knowledge” (including the ones that, according to some twenty century epistemologists, occur repetitively in discursive thinking, allowing us to grasp the meaning of the reproduction of the sound of words by the imagination) and (b) what Locke called “sensitive knowledge,” which the Oxford School calls “recognition,” and which is responsible for sensory perception (for examples of the use of this term by one of these Neo-Aristotelians, cf. Price [2d. Ed. 1969]). Finally, the paradigmatic supersubtle thought is the one that conceives a directional, linear threefold structure of experience, which is called *trimaṇḍala* in Sanskrit and *'khor gsum* in Tibetan—these being the terms I render as “threefold directional thought-structure”—and which consists in the notion that there is a perceiver, a perception and something perceived; a doer, an action and something done; a thinker, thinking and thoughts; etc.

As advanced in the paragraph defining the *delusory valuation / absolutization of thought*, the delusory valuation / absolutization of the intuitive comprehension of the meaning of the words that make up the chains of coarse / discursive thoughts that occurs repetitively in discursive thinking gives rise to the certainty that some maps in term of discursive thought perfectly match the territory and as such are perfectly correct, while others fail to match it and thus are fundamentally wrong—which is delusive, for as we have seen the digital, fragmentary maps of thought cannot match the analog, holistic territory they interpret.

In its turn, the delusory valuation / absolutization of the intuitive comprehension that takes place in what Locke called “sensible knowledge” and that the Oxford School refers to as “recognition”—which consists in the mute recognition and perception of the segments that what *Gestalttheorie* calls “figure-ground minds” single out in the analog, holistic territory of the sensory continuum, in terms of digital, divisive thoughts that as such are incapable of matching it—causes us to confuse the map with the territory it interprets and which it simply cannot match, and thus to have the delusive impression that the singled out segment is *in itself* the understanding that arises in this way (that which drives us to single out a figure is that we have a concept that corresponds to the segments of the sensory continuum that we single out, and that interest for what the concept expresses is aroused at the moment). This implies delusively taking the segment that our mental functions have singled out in the undivided sensory continuum to be *in itself* separate from the ground and to constitute a substance—which can only occur when the focus of conscious attention is sufficiently narrow and its boundaries are sufficiently impermeable. This, in its turn, depends on the reduction of the energetic volume determining the scope of awareness (Skt. *kuṇḍalinī*; Tib. *thig le*: note that the Tibetan term *thig le* renders both the Sanskrit terms *bindu* and *tilaka*, and the Sanskrit term *kuṇḍalinī*—which is quite logical insofar as the increase of *kuṇḍalinī* depends on *bindu* in the Tantric sense of the term) brought about by the process of socialization, which brings the oceanic feeling to a close—which is a must if the infant is to learn to function in civilized societies, but which, contrarily to Freud's belief, represents a paramount, decisive loss (however, one should not believe that the mere recovery of the oceanic condition, even if this did not involve losing the learning done throughout one's life, would give rise to definitive true sanity / Awakening—for, as shown below, the oceanic condition of infants is also pervaded by *avidyā*).

The delusory valuation / absolutization of what both Descartes and Locke called *intuitive knowledge*, and especially of what Kant called concepts of the Understanding (including the categories and the rest of those concepts that he deemed to be *a priori*), in general makes us feel its contents to be *true* (even though upon reflecting on them critically *a posteriori* we may conclude that they were false). (In terms of his division of the psyche into separate, autonomous compartments—already denounced by Herder (cf. Mayos, 2004)—Kant situated what he called ideas in Reason, taste, aesthetic and teleological judgments in the Faculty of Judgment, concepts in the Understanding, and intuitions of space and time in Sensitiveness or Sensibility—all of which interacted with each other [e.g., in what is generally termed recognition, the concepts of the Understanding would be applied to the realm of Sensitiveness—and the same would occur in other mental operations with the judgments of the Faculty of Judgment and with the ideas and ideals of Reason]. In all of these compartments, some of the contents of thought [for in our own terms all ideas, judgments, concepts and the intuitions of sensitiveness or sensibility are thoughts] were *a priori* in the sense that they did not derive from experience, even though they arose with experience. Kant's reasonings showing these concepts to be *a priori* seem quite plausible. However, if the whole of reality is the spontaneous manifestation of the energy or *thugs rje* aspect of the Base, all that occurs in the universe may be seen as the play or dance of that aspect of the Base—and, in fact, both Tantric Buddhism and non-Buddhist Tantra represent human life as a cosmic play (Skt. *lila*; Tib. *rol pa*) of hide-and-seek of universal Gnitiveness / awareness with itself, implying that the delusion called *avidyā* arises when this universal Gnitiveness / awareness, *in and as the individual's dualistic consciousness*, forgets its true condition and believes itself to be a separate, autonomous, individual soul or center of consciousness. In my interpretation the universal Gnitiveness / awareness in question is what Heraclitus called *λόγος/lógos*, and the Ephesian's words in fr. 2 DK—“Though the *lógos* is common, each individual believes he or she has a

separate, particular and private intellect”—which are discussed in the regular text of the main body of this book, convey the idea explained in this paragraph.

More particularly, the delusory valuation / absolutization of judgments of taste, or of the aesthetic judgments that Kant wrongly believed to be *a priori*, causes us to strongly feel the object to be inherently pleasant or unpleasant (Cf. Capriles, 2000c; as to these judgments not being *a priori*, as noted in that work, if they were *a priori*, artistic tastes would be the same in all cultures and times). The delusory valuation / absolutization of what Kant called teleological judgments and deemed to be *a priori* makes us feel the world and our life were made for a purpose (these judgments derive from the feeling that we are mental subjects or souls thrown into this world—in the sense of Heidegger’s [1996, e.g., pp. 232-233; original German edition p. 251] use of the term *Geworfen*, which leaves us in a state of *Geworfenheit* or *thrownness*—on whom experience is imposed, thus being a consequence of the manifestation of the second sense of *avidyā* in the second sense [in both Dzogchen classifications] and thereby of *samsāra*. Cf. Capriles, 2007a vol. I). The delusory valuation / absolutization of what Kant called the ideas and ideals of reason and asserted to be *a priori* causes us to strongly feel human actions and their doers to be inherently good or evil (these judgments derive from the feeling that we are mental subjects or souls thrown into this world—in the sense of Heidegger’s [1996, e.g., pp. 232-233; original German edition p. 251] use of the term *Geworfen*, which leaves us in a state of *Geworfenheit* or *thrownness*—on whom experience is imposed, thus being a consequence of the manifestation of the second sense of *avidyā* in the second sense in both Dzogchen classifications of *avidyā*, and thereby of *samsāra*. Cf. Capriles, 2007a vol. I). Etc.

Finally, the delusory valuation / absolutization of the supersubtle thought called “threefold directional thought-structure” gives rise to the grasper and the grasped—i.e., to the subject-object duality. The mental subject that arises thereby is an illusory gap in the continuity of the Base which produces an illusory disruption in it—sundering it into the three dimensions of space and the time dimension—and which thereby seems to lie at the center of the four dimensions, thus being the reference point of dimensionality. As noted above, since the subject that is the core of dualistic consciousness is experienced as being at a distance from the wholeness and plenitude of the Base, the consciousness in question experiences the lack of this wholeness and plenitude. It is significant that, as first Plato and then Heidegger emphasized, the etymological meaning of *present* (from the Greek *παρουσία/parousia* and the Latin *praesentia*) is *to be before* (in the sense of *being in front of* and thus implying *being at a distance from*)—and that, as shown below, this meaning is evidenced by both the spatial and the temporal acceptations of the word.

5.- The *phenomenon of being*, which together with the subject-object duality is the most basic of the delusive appearances of *samsāra*, contrarily to Sartre’s (1980) assertions, is the *being of the phenomenon*. The explanation of the way in which the *phenomenon of being* is produced by the delusory valuation / absolutization of the concept of being inherent in the threefold thought structure, and the substantiation of the fact that the phenomenon in question is a delusive appearance, are provided in others of my works—most extensively and painstakingly in Capriles (2007, vol. I).

6.- Though the term used to refer to this nondual awareness in the Dzogchen teachings is the same that Master Dharmakīrti used to refer to awareness (of) consciousness, the former is perfect *nirvāṇa*, whereas the latter is the core of *samsāra*. This has been a source of confusion for a very long time, but Sartre has offered us the means to make the difference between both usages of the term clear. Cf. the entry *rigpa* in Wikipedia, which uses my clarification of the difference between these two terms.

7.- The four characteristics of the conditioned (Pāli, *asaṅkhata*; Skt. *asamskrta*; Tib. *'dus ma byas*) are: (1) production, birth or origination; (2) subsistence; (3) change, and (4) dissolution or disappearance.

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