

# Transactional Analysis of Esoteric Systems: A Metaphilosophical Study

Stan V. McDaniel

## 1. Introduction

The transactional developmental model, which is inferred from an extensive analysis of the organizational logic underlying a wide spectrum of philosophical and esoteric metaphysical systems, is summarized in my paper, “Models of Development in Esoteric and Western Thought.” That paper sets forth the basic concepts of the model, along with five schemata, or diagrammatic representations, that assist in making comparisons between systems.<sup>1</sup> In summary, the five schemata are those of sequence, hierarchy, complementarity, analogy and adaptation. Together these represent a *generalized* model of the development of a functional whole over time, where the logical organization is applicable to a variety of contents. The transactional logic is in itself essentially content-free. The present paper assumes some familiarity with the schemata referenced above.

Transactional analysis of a philosophical or esoteric system seeks to describe the system from the perspective provided by transactional logic. This involves a shift of attention away from the content of such systems and focuses instead on the organizational factors independently of the content. This change of focus is based on the fact that despite wide disparities and even incompatibilities of content, the logic of the schemata unconsciously emerges and persists in a multiplicity of otherwise dissimilar, and even conflicting, scenarios developed over a long period of historical time. Such an analysis might well be termed metaphilosophical, because it stresses the form of differing systems rather than their specific content.

Transactional analysis accordingly identifies the ways in which such systems *clothe* the logical elements of the schemata in the dress of metaphor, compares systems with respect to their fulfillment of the requirements of the schemata, and refines our understanding of the schemata themselves by responsiveness to the interplay among metaphors that serve common logical functions. To this latter extent the transactional approach may concern itself with some specific contents, but only as inspection and comparison of such contents assists in clarifying and understanding the underlying logic of the model. Objections to the analyses based on individual or doctrinal beliefs about the *content* of any particular system would consequently be based on a misunderstanding of this formal approach.

## 2. Transactional Analysis of Tantric Systems

The key term which emerges in the transactional developmental model is *continuity*. The model represents a process of development in which there are no metaphysical “breaks” among the functional components of a system, either in the course of development from earlier to later forms or in the telic relations among functions at the culmination of development. In the paper referenced earlier, the terms used were *temporal continuity* and *functional continuity*.

The *-tin* in “continuity” traces to Latin *tenere* “hold fast,” cognate with *tendere* “stretch out,” Latin root *ten-*, Sanskrit root *tan-* of many meanings: “stretch, stretch a cord or bow, extend, spread (as roots), be diffused, shine (as light), continue, endure, put forth, propagate.” Associated terms are *tanu* “skin,” *tantu*

“thread, fiber, cobweb,” *tantura* “the fibrous root of a lotus,” *tantuvana* “weaving,” *tantuvaya* “weaver, spider,” and *tantra* “a loom, the string of a lute, a sinew or vein, heart-strings.”

Here in deep etymology East meets West; and in more than etymology, for a meeting of eastern tantric systems and western transactional philosophy emerges from the fact that transactional logic is shared by both. *Tantric* however is an easily misunderstood term. It is used here in the sense of its root-meaning of organic continuity as expressed by images of propagation, thread, fiber, weaving, diffusion. This broad sense of the term includes, but is not limited to, Hindu and Buddhist Tantric Philosophy.

In what follows, I will apply transactional analysis to some features of the interpretation of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism set forth in *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* by Lama Anagarika Govinda. Although the primary purpose here is to illustrate the main elements of transactional logic, the discussion will also serve as an example of transactional analysis of a text, and what value such an analysis may have for understanding and critique of a given esoteric system.

In *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* Anagarika Govinda invokes “Space” as a general symbol for the total field of consciousness, identical with the Great Void (*sunyata*) which is not a “voidness of indifference” but is “capable of holding myriads of things of various shapes and forms.”<sup>2</sup> Yet its diversity is at the same time asserted to be a unity. Thus in its logical role the Great Void functions as a core symbol of non-dualism. Govinda describes the encounter with the Great Void in meditation:

**“In this space-experience the temporal sequence is converted into a simultaneous co-existence, the side by side existence of things into a state of mutual interpenetration, and this again does not remain static but becomes a living continuum, in which time and space are integrated into that ultimate incommensurable ‘point-like’ unity, which in Tibetan is called ‘thig-le’ (Skt.: *bindu*)”<sup>3</sup>**

In approaching a passage of this sort transactional analysis does not concern itself with the metaphysical (descriptive) meaning of expressions such as “simultaneous co-existence” and “side by side existence of things into a state of mutual interpenetration.” Rather, it seeks to identify the logically operative phraseology in relation to the logic expressed by the schemata of the transactional model of development. A frequent clue to the presence of logically important, but descriptively phrased, expressions is awkward or ambiguous construction. Since transactional logic draws together elements that are incommensurable from a dualistic perspective, metaphysically oriented phraseology that attempts to express transactional relationships is characteristically obscure or defective.

The grammatical awkwardness (not to mention vagueness) of an expression like “side by side existence of things into a state of mutual interpenetration,” is a typical indicator of the presence of a transactional element. From a transactional standpoint the reason for the awkward qualifier “into a state of mutual interpenetration” is the need to assert the logical requirement, imposed by *The Return* in Schema 2, for more than merely mechanical (“side by side”) overlapping of functions. For example, we find John Dewey speaking in a quite similar vein: “The distinction between physical, psycho-physical and mental is...one of levels of increasing complexity and intimacy of interaction.”<sup>4</sup> Dewey’s phrase *increasing intimacy of interaction* is the logical parallel here to Govinda’s “into a state of mutual interpenetration.” It should be noted, however, that the emphasis in the tantric system is upon metaphysical substantives rather than functional interrelation; the result is that “interpenetration” is often presented in esoteric systems as a literal mixing of particles of one substance with another. Transactionally this is understood as a materialistic *metaphor* for the logical (functional) relation intended by the schemata.

## Sunyata

Govinda's use of the phrase "living continuum" reminds us that the transactional schemata are used to describe developmental continuity. In the quoted passage, the "living continuum" of the Great Void (Sunyata) is a symbol for a field in which dynamic "temporal sequence" is reconciled with static "side-by-side existence." The logical relation is that between the schema of sequence and those of hierarchy and complementarity. The logical point of organization, reconciling these incommensurables, is *bindu*, which has here exactly the role of TELOS as it appears in the center of the Schema of Complementarity (Schema 3).<sup>5</sup>

Schema 4 of the transactional model (the Schema of Analogy) was described as representing "a unification of serial organization in the resultant system with structural (hierarchical) organization by means of a rule expressed as the Analogy of Patterning." Given Govinda's description of the experience of Sunyata as a unification of seriality and structure, what transactional logic predicts here is functional differentiation within the Great Void, and the presence of the Analogy of Patterning among the resultant functions. Following this logic precisely, Govinda describes the necessity for differentiation and the manner in which the Void becomes differentiated:

**"We discern in the space of our inner experience, according to the sequence of phases in its unfoldment, an eastern, southern, western, or northern direction or form of awareness, expression or attitude, without thereby denying the unity and the simultaneous co-existence of all these spatial aspects and qualities of consciousness...The nature of consciousness and of Buddhahood can only be brought nearer to our understanding by a specification of their qualities and by individualizing their various aspects."**<sup>6</sup>

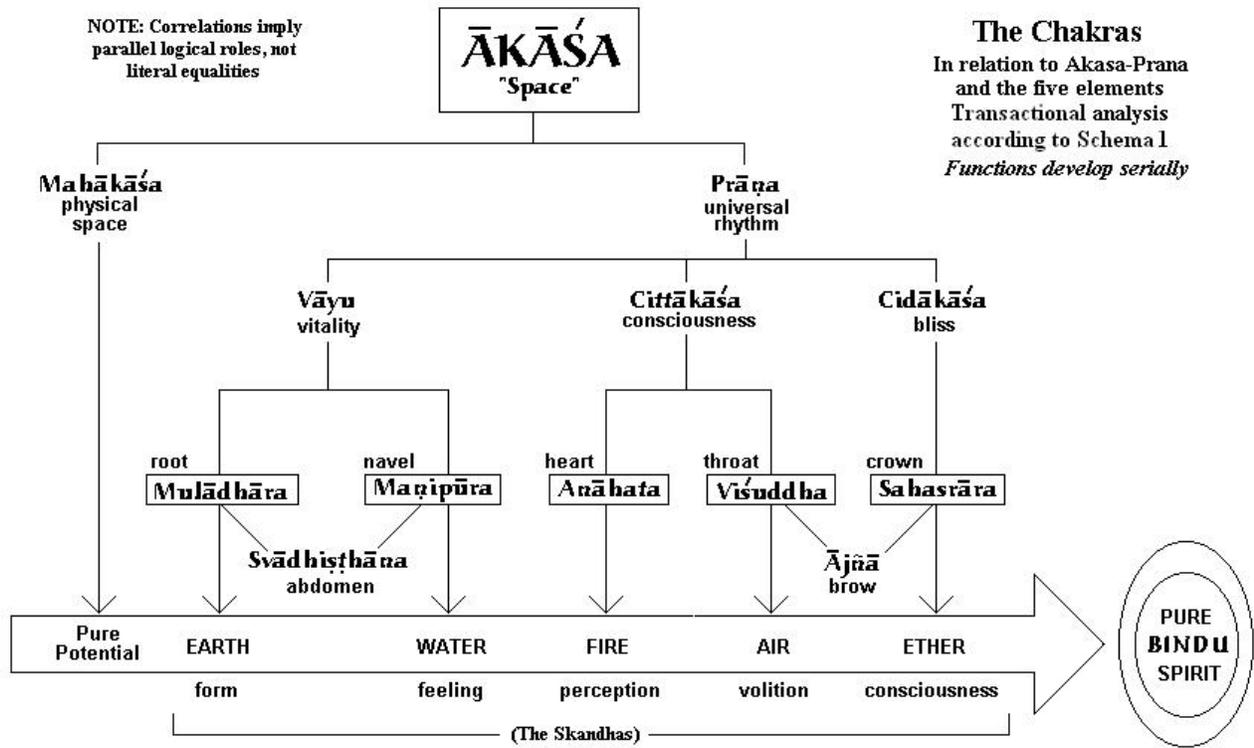
By "unfoldment" (functional differentiation) the Void exhibits sequential phases, each phase identified as a "direction." These "directions" (including the fifth, or central direction) are given the logical character of transactional functions through a sophisticated set of correspondences asserted between them and a group of symbolic pentads that include the five *Dhyani*-Buddhas, the five *skandhas* (aggregates), the five elements, the five *chakras* (psychic centers), and the five *kosas* (sheaths), as well as supporting concepts of *Akasa*, *Prana*, and *Vayu*.

## The Chakras

Tantric Buddhism identifies five chakras, or "psychic centers," plus two intermediate or linking centers. The chakras are arranged both serially and hierarchically, with diagrammatic emphasis upon hierarchy: the chakras are usually placed on a vertical axis, with the "highest" at the top. The serial aspect of the chakras is established by their necessary sequence of perfection in the course of yogic practice. Increasing complexity appears in the chakras as progressively more "petals" or subordinate functions along the axis of development. Further analysis of the chakra system is provided in the figures discussed in the paragraphs below.

The COSMOS within which the chakras are differentiated is a unified spatiotemporal field identified by the concept pair *akaṣa-prana* (space and force). Figure 1 provides a transactional analysis of the chakra system in relation to *akaṣa-prana* under the schema of seriality (Schema 1). In the field of *akaṣa-prana*, *akaṣa* is the all-embracing matrix while *prana* ("breath") is the energy that governs all differentiation. As a material function only, *akaṣa* is *Mahakaṣa*, matter and the static space that contains it. Under the vitalization of *prana*, *akaṣa* passes from the lower functions of nutrition and reproduction into *Cittakaṣa* or

consciousness, and finally at “the highest stage of spiritual experience” it is *Cidakasa*, a state in which “the duality of subject and object is eliminated.”<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 1**  
**Analysis under Schema 1**

Govinda states that while akāśa in its grossest form “presents itself as matter,” it “merges imperceptibly” into the realm of “dynamic forces.”<sup>8</sup> The phrase “merges imperceptibly” is a characteristic transactional metaphor. It has the *logical* role of asserting developmental continuity between material and psychic functions. Based on the Schema of Sequence (Schema 1) we would say that *Mahakāśa* has the role of the elementary or primitive function while *prana* constitutes the first defining function. In terms of the logic this would be the dynamic of synthesis, so it would be expected that the various functional stages under *prana* will display the analogy of patterning (see Figure 2).<sup>9</sup>

### Vayu

Prana in its earliest form manifests as the group of “bodily functions” collectively called *vayu* (airs). *Vayu* refers to “the elementary state of aggregation as to the vitalizing and dynamic forces of the human organism.”<sup>10</sup> The *vayu* govern functions of assimilation, digestion, respiration, and other “metabolic functions of transformation.”<sup>11</sup> Thus *prana* is analogous to *anima* or soul, “breath,” in Aristotle’s system, whose earliest manifestation also lies with the nutritive-reproductive function. Movement of *prana* as “psychic heat” along the axis of development, accomplished by yoga, is also movement “upward,” that is,

hierarchical movement.<sup>12</sup> Figure 2 (left side) provides a transactional analysis of the chakra system in relation to the schema of hierarchy. (Right side will be explained below.)

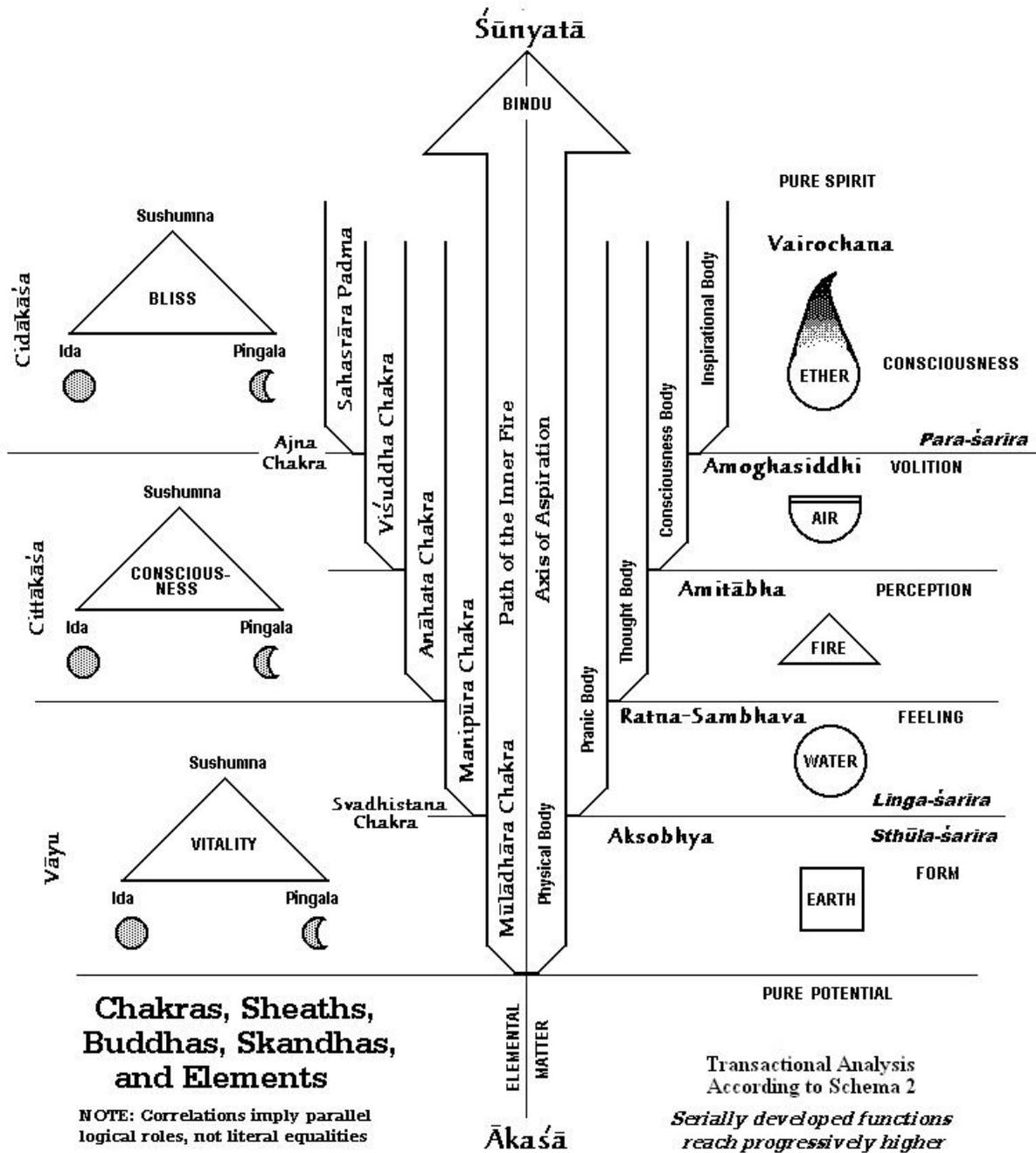


Figure 2  
Analysis under Schema 2

The distinguishing mark of the progress of prana is its division into three energies, two complementary and one mediating, whose paths are the psychic channels or *nadis* that wind their way upward from the muladhara chakra to sahasrara-padma at the crown of the head. The left (*ida*) and right

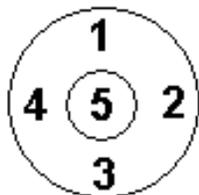
(*pingala*) nadis are called “masculine” and “feminine” respectively. They are also called “solar” and “lunar.” The two complementary energies that traverse the ida and pingala are associated with the series of the five aggregates of consciousness (*skandhas*) and the series of the elements (*mahabhuta*) respectively. Thus the ida is the channel for consciousness, the pingala the channel for materiality.<sup>13</sup>

The symbolic result of this is that the interlacing course of ida and pingala represents the synthesis of *consciousness* and *matter* at successive levels of realization. This synthesis has the form of a triplicity, as the ida and pingala nadis cross one another at the central channel (*sushumna*). The logical role of these repeated crossings at successive stages is to express the Analogy of Patterning as ascending triangles of synthesis, shown on the left side of Figure 2.

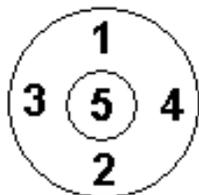
### Buddhas, Elements and Skandhas

Govinda says that the sushumna is “not only able to cause a *synthesis* between the solar and lunar currents, but also to unite the forces of the highest and lowest center.”<sup>14</sup> Thus the sushumna is the *tantra*, or thread, that establishes continuity, which in transactional logic is irreducibly expressed by the Analogy of Patterning. Govinda’s use of the term here provides a clear understanding of the dynamic of development and the analogy of patterning as expressions of synthesis.

Given the importance of the sushumna and the strong statement of the Analogy of Patterning brought out in the triangles of Figure 1, one would expect to find expressions of full functional complementarity among the members of the various fivefold series. This entails diagrammatic presentation of the functions around the rim of a circle (as in Schema 3), metaphors of synthesis common to each function as well as to the whole (as in Schema 4), and the presence of *The Return* in relation to hierarchy.<sup>15</sup> In the analysis of the mandala of the five Dhyani-Buddhas, below, these requirements of the transactional model are clearly established.



**Sequence**



**Polarity**

**Figure 3**

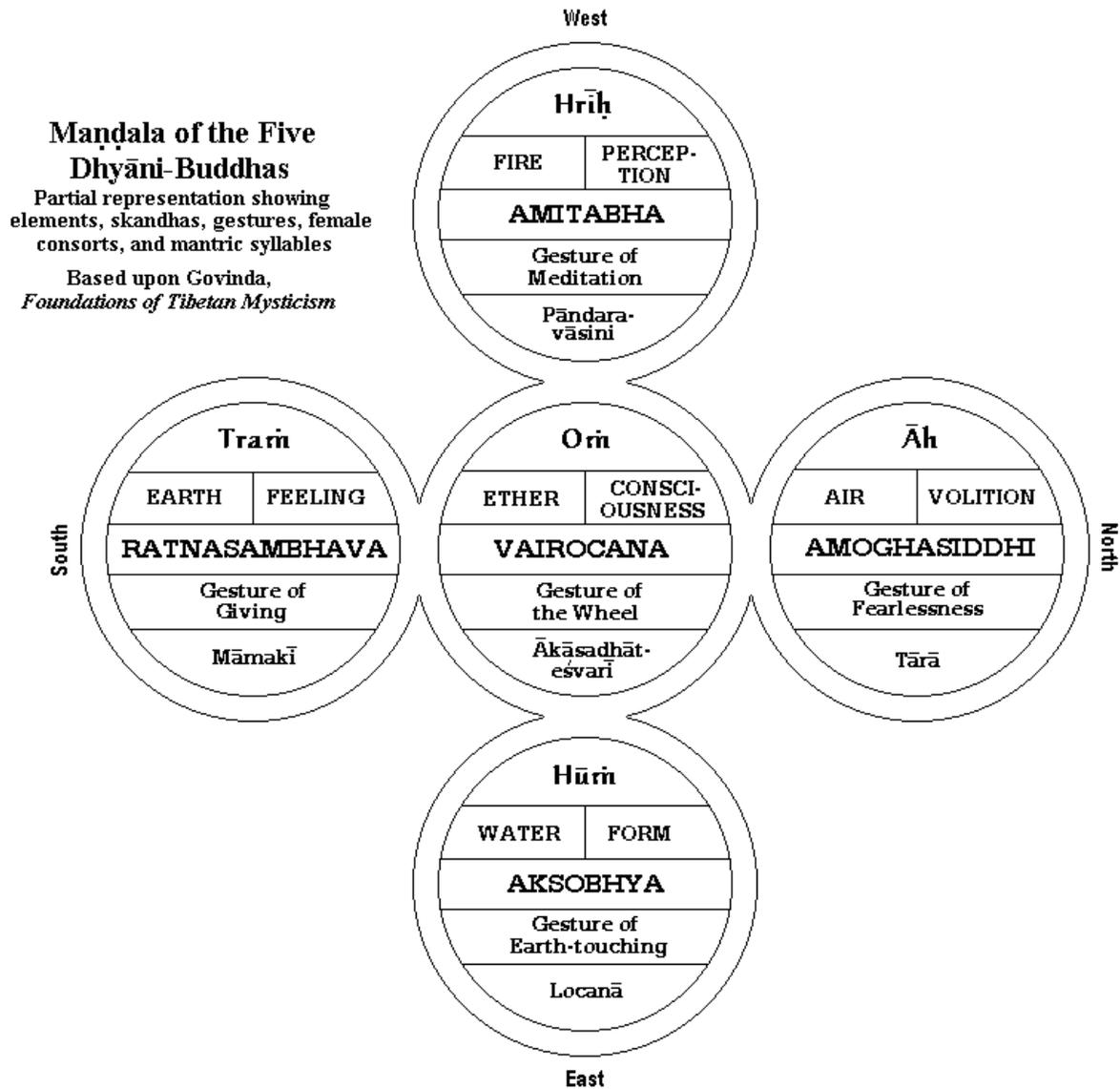
A series of functions may be distributed around the rim of a circle as a diagrammatic representation of equal participation in a whole system, i.e. functional complementarity. In creating such a diagram, the tension between sequence (Schema 1) and polar complementarity (Schema 3) creates a problem of representation. Figure 3 illustrates these choices in the case of four functions, where a fifth represents the telic factor of unification and is normally placed in the center. But if it is wished to create a diagram covering both sequence and complementarity in a single image, various inconsistencies can occur which can give the diagram a seemingly inconsistent character.

Figure 4 below is a simplified representation of the mandala or circular arrangement of the Five Dhyani-Buddhas as it appears in Govinda’s book (*dhyani* = meditation). In this figure, each of the five directions east, south, west, north, and central, is occupied by an array of symbol groups clustered around its respective Buddha. Ideal polar complementarity is represented by the opposite positioning of elements (earth, air, fire, water, ether) over the four directions: the east-west axis holds the complementary pair water-fire, while the north-south axis balances air (the lightest element) with earth (the heaviest element). Ether lies in the fifth, or central, direction, having the role of the unifying element associated with the Great Void

(*Sunyata*) and *bindu*, the point of freedom and unity.<sup>16</sup>

But the evidence for full functional complementarity in this system is actually mixed, as the analysis ultimately reveals. In this mandala the schematic tension between polar and sequential arrangements in a circular figure is manifest. By placing water opposite fire to achieve polarity, the sequential order of

elements from greater to lesser density is violated. The proper sequential order of elements (from gross to finer) is *earth* → *water* → *fire* → *air* instead of *water* → *earth* → *fire* → *air*. Thus the mandala appears to default to complementarity over sequence. However, in this mandala more than one fivefold series is associated with each Buddha, and this allows ambiguous mapping to answer the problem of diagrammatic incommensurability.



**Figure 4**  
**The Dhyani-Buddhas**

Sequential order in the mandala is recovered by the association of the directions with the five skandhas, which follow in order of increasing abstraction clockwise around the mandala: *form* → *feeling* → *perception* → *volition* → *consciousness*. This is the sequential arrangement as seen in Figure 1. Thus in

relation to the elements, the mandala is polar; in relation to the skandhas, the mandala is sequential. But then this effort can create problems for the presence of the Buddhas in the diagram.

On the right side of Figure 2, the Buddhas are arranged vertically in the order of their association with the skandhas, not the elements. If the sequential aspect were made dominant in the mandala of Figure 3, the Buddha Aksobhya in the eastern direction would be associated with earth, not water, while Ratna-Sambhava in the southern direction would have water as his element. This *is* the case in Figure 2, where sequence and hierarchy, not complementarity, are uppermost.

This observation helps to explain why the positions of Aksobhya and Ratna-Sambhava are ambiguous with regard to the elements earth and water. Aksobhya's element is water because he represents the "Wisdom of the Great Mirror" and not because of water's mobility.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, *Aksobhya* means "immovable," like the earth; Aksobhya is associated with solidity through the diamond sceptre (*vajra*) he holds and the elephant throne on which he sits. He is associated with the skandha of matter and is accompanied by the Bodhisattva *Kshitigarbha*, whose title means "Matrix of the Earth."<sup>18</sup> And finally, Aksobhya makes the earth-touching gesture.

At the same time, Ratna-Sambhava is connected with water in a variety of ways: His gesture is that of giving, suggesting motion; his skandha is feeling, correlated with the navel chakra, whose element is water precisely because of its quality of mobility; when Govinda gives correlations between the *Dhyani*-Buddhas and the chakras, he places Ratna-Sambhava at the navel chakra and the element water; and finally, Ratna-Sambhava's consort Mamaki represents water. The earth/water ambiguity revealed between Aksobhya and Ratna-Sambhava, produced through these multiple symbolic overlays, satisfies the logical demand for both sequence and polarity in the mandala.

This application of transactional logic successfully explains the apparent inconsistency and ambiguity in the association of elements and skandhas with the Buddhas. As an esotericist with a background in western philosophy, Govinda is more sensitive than many authors to the demand for consistency, and for theoretical explanation, often put forward by western critics. In attempting to explain the shifting character of the symbolism, Govinda comes precariously close to asserting the existence of a governing transactional logic.

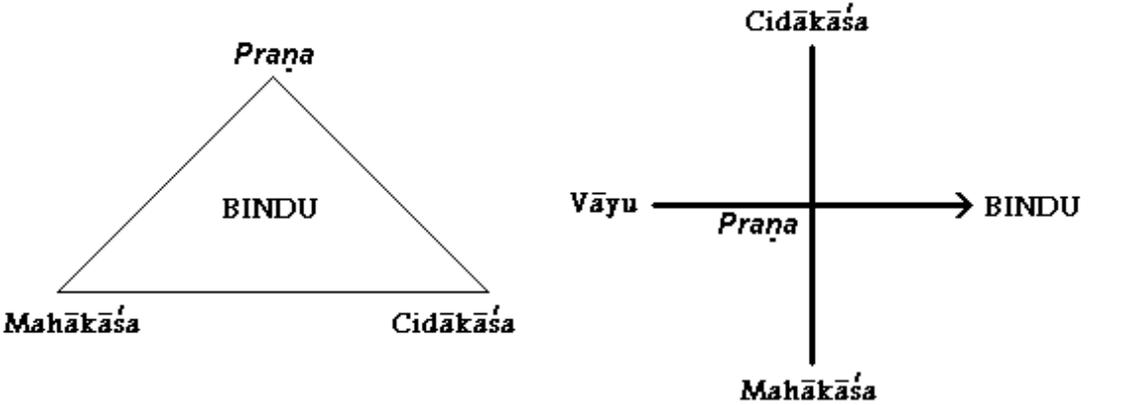
**"These categories of associations...are not arbitrary, but follow their own inherent laws. In this respect they are comparable to living organisms whose movements are not predictable, notwithstanding their dependence on certain laws."<sup>19</sup>**

Govinda here attempts to give some degree of substance to the occult reference "their own inherent laws" by invoking the analogy of a living organism; from a transactional point of view, the analogy is correct, since transactional logic is associated with the concept of developmental continuity in biological evolution. In this case, the reference to "dependence on certain laws" would be precisely the logical requirements of the schemata, and the assertion that the movements of living organisms are "not predictable" reflects the incommensurate character of synthesis as expressed through the schema of freedom (Schema 5).<sup>20</sup> This necessary logical element of diagrammatic incommensurability forces symbol systems utilizing an underlying transactional logic to develop a plethora of ambiguous and contradictory symbolic elements (such as we have seen here in the symbol clusters of the *Dhyani*-Buddhas) in order to accomplish exactly what Govinda is attempting to explain.

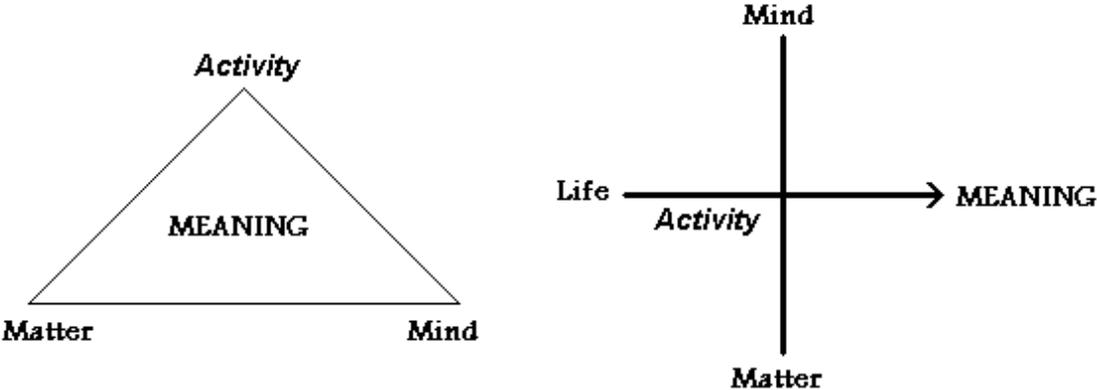
It must be emphasized that transactional analysis does not have a responsibility to explain the incommensurate character of the schemata, since it is a metaphilosophical analysis concerned with *description* of the logic of such systems independently of their content. However, the explanation is a fairly simple one, and has already been suggested above: Overall, the logic of developmental continuity is based upon the

dynamic of the first defining function, expressed by the Analogy of Patterning, and this analogy is always an expression of *synthesis*. The concept of synthesis, in turn, is the concept of the reconciliation of apparent incommensurables. Thus from a dualistic point of view, the transactional model is a disturbing affirmation of dynamic tension and its result, which is freedom, both of which are abhorrent to a mechanistic view that seeks reduction to absolute certainties.<sup>21</sup>

In the mandala of the Dhyani-Buddhas the Buddhas of each direction are depicted *yab-yum*, that is, in sexual embrace with their *dakinis* or feminine aspects. The embracing couples, in a natural symbolism, fill the logical role of synthesis, the first defining function. This is a fundamental expression of Tantra.<sup>22</sup> The biological synthesis of sexual reproduction exists in absolute continuity, through the Analogy of Patterning, with the logical synthesis of concepts and the spiritual synthesis that constitutes union with the divine. All are manifestations of Love. The cross is a well-known esoteric symbol for sexual union.<sup>23</sup> The relation between the triangle and the cross as diagrammatic representations of synthesis is depicted in Figure 5.



Two Representations of Tantric Synthesis



Two Representations of Transactional Synthesis

Figure 5

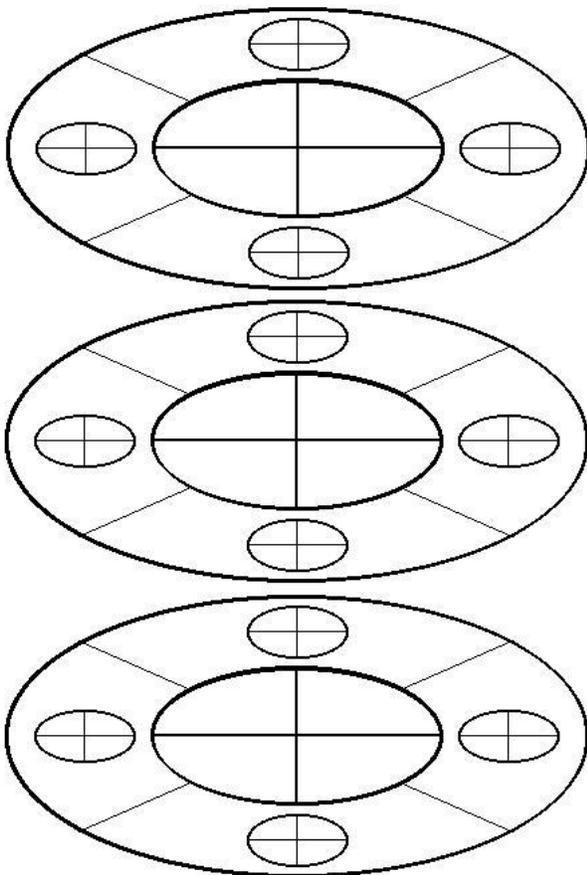
## The Triple Mandala

Because of the pervasive presence of the Analogy of Patterning in transactional systems, the structure at any given level is potentially a function of a yet higher level. This characteristic gives rise to multiple levels of presentation the effect of which is to iterate again and again the logical characteristics of the schemata. Govinda presents an example of this symbol-multiplication in a diagram that duplicates the mandala of the Dhyani-Buddhas at three levels, expanding the two-dimensional mandala of Figure 3 into a three-dimensional figure. Figure 6 is a simplified representation of this expanded version. At the bottom is the mandala of the five Dhyani-Buddhas in yab-yum position, here abstracted as crosses of synthesis. Above this are the mandalas of “parallel” figures classified as the Knowledge Holding Deities and the Wrathful or Blood-Drinking Deities (Herukas).<sup>24</sup>

While each individual Buddha in the two-dimensional mandala is associated with a specific chakra, in the triple mandala each *entire mandala* is associated with a chakra: The original mandala of the “Peaceful Deities” (Dhyani-Buddhas) is identified with the heart center, the mandala of the Knowledge-Holding Deities is associated with the throat center, and that of the Wrathful (Blood-Drinking) Deities with the brain center. In other words, the structure of Schema 4 is superimposed upon the chakras at each level, creating a powerful statement of the Analogy of Patterning. In this case, the entire schema becomes the analogy.<sup>25</sup>

The triple mandala may be compared with the triple ascending triangles shown in Figure 2. There, “parallel” functions occupy corresponding locations at the points of triangles at different levels. In Govinda’s figure, “parallel” functions occupy corresponding locations (North, East, South, West, Central) on the three mandalas. Govinda asserts the “inner identity” of the (parallel) “divine figures inhabiting these centres.”<sup>26</sup> “Inner identity” means that the parallel functions are related by the Analogy of Patterning, asserted in the triple mandala by depicting the deities at each level yab-yum.

Govinda also states that the Knowledge-Holding Deities (*Vidyadhara*) are a lower-level “reflex” of the Blood-Drinking Deities (*Herukas*).<sup>27</sup> “Reflex” is one of a cluster of expressions used to fill the same logical role that “parallel” and “inner identity” do: asserting continuity. On a transactional analysis, the profusion of metaphorical terms like “reflex,” “parallel,” etc., stems not from their having any clear metaphysical meaning, but from the dedication of the system to providing a garb of metaphor for the schemata.



Transactional Analysis of the Triple Mandala  
Schema 4 at Three Levels of Presentation

Figure 6

## Interrupted Return?

Govinda says the knowledge-principle of the brain center “turns into the poison of mortality” only for those who “stagnate in the narrow vessel of their egohood.” In this case, the upward path of “psychic heat” stops at the crown center, and does not complete *The Return*. Logically this is the analogue of what Dewey calls the Philosophical Fallacy, the cutting-off of reflective experience from *return* to the lived world and its reification instead as metaphysical substance. The “poison of mortality” is the direct analogue for the pathology of metaphysical dualism. For those who are “willing to give up their illusory self,”<sup>28</sup> there is a compensating *downward* movement that comes to rest in the heart center. Govinda provides a diagram of this movement in which the characteristic arch of *The Return* is clearly evident.<sup>29</sup> Figure 7 is a simplified version of Govinda’s diagram.

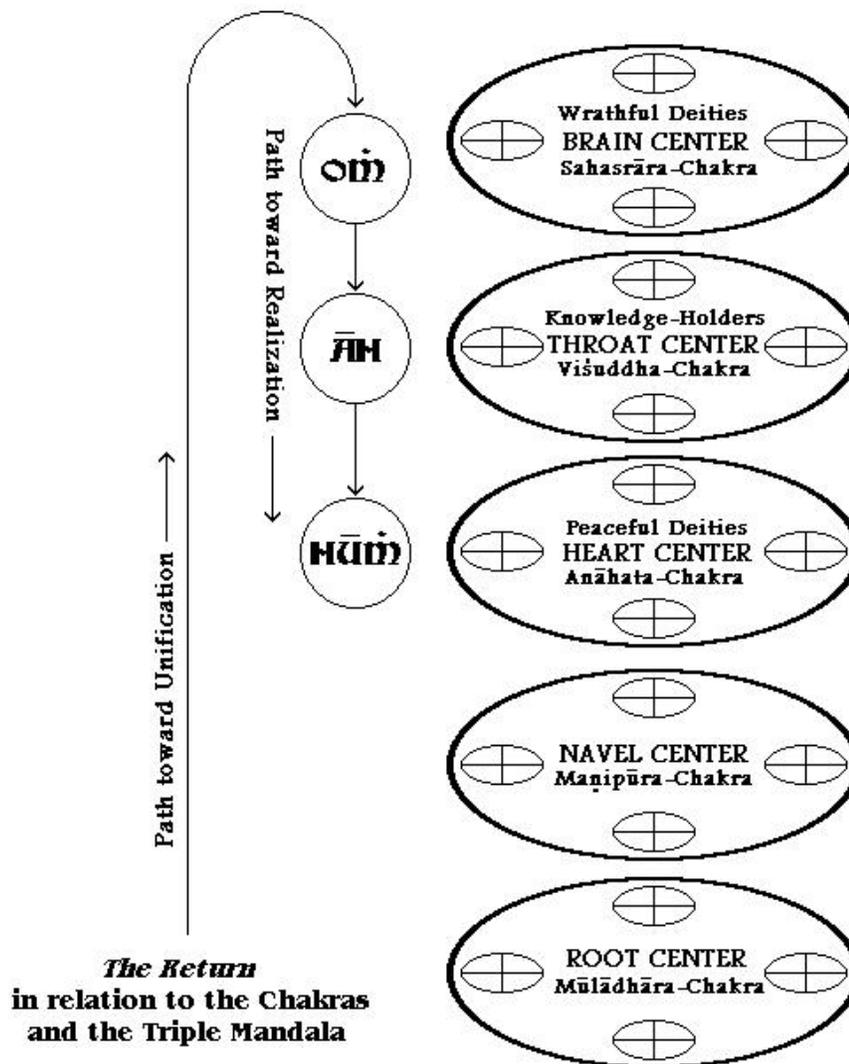


Figure 7

In Figure 7 the arch begins at the level of the root center, rises to the brain center (associated here with the syllable OM), then descends only as far as the heart center (syllable HUM). The incomplete arch raises a transactional question. Why does the path stop at the heart center? According to Schemata 2 and 3, which demand full functional complementarity, the arch *must* continue back to the root center. Limitation of the return path is, in fact, the danger inherent in a linear hierarchical presentation. This is the reason Schema 2, which stresses hierarchy, must be balanced by Schema 3, The Schema of Complementarity.

One possibility, which would remain consistent with the schematism, would be to consider the heart chakra as a “center” (i.e. the center of a mandala) such that the “upper” and “lower” chakras in the hierarchical structure are complementary functions. Against this is the presence of a tendency, which we will see evidence of later, to give the “lower” functions an inferior place – a tendency which goes firmly against the strict requirements of transactional logic.<sup>30</sup>

In the doctrine of Hindu Tantra-Yoga as represented in the *Sat-Chakra-Nirupana*, for example, when the upward flow of Kundalini reaches the highest center, *amrta* the “golden nectar,” is released downward to inform *all* the lower centers.<sup>31</sup> This manifestation of *The Return* is described as follows:

**“The beautiful Kundalini drinks the excellent red nectar issuing from Para-Siva, and returns from there...along the path of Kula, and again enters the Muladhara”**.<sup>32</sup>

The logical requirement that the hierarchical relationship established by *The Return* must enrich and perfect the lower levels is described in Woodroffe’s commentary on the *Sat-Chakra-Nirupana* as making the lower centers “visible and manifest:”

**“As She [Kundalini] returns She infuses Rasa [sap of life] into the various things She had previously absorbed into Herself when going upward, and by the infusion of Rasa, She makes them all visible and manifest”**.<sup>33</sup>

This is directly comparable to the demand which Dewey’s Pragmatism puts upon any philosophy of experience, as a reflective endeavor:

**“Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?”**<sup>34</sup>

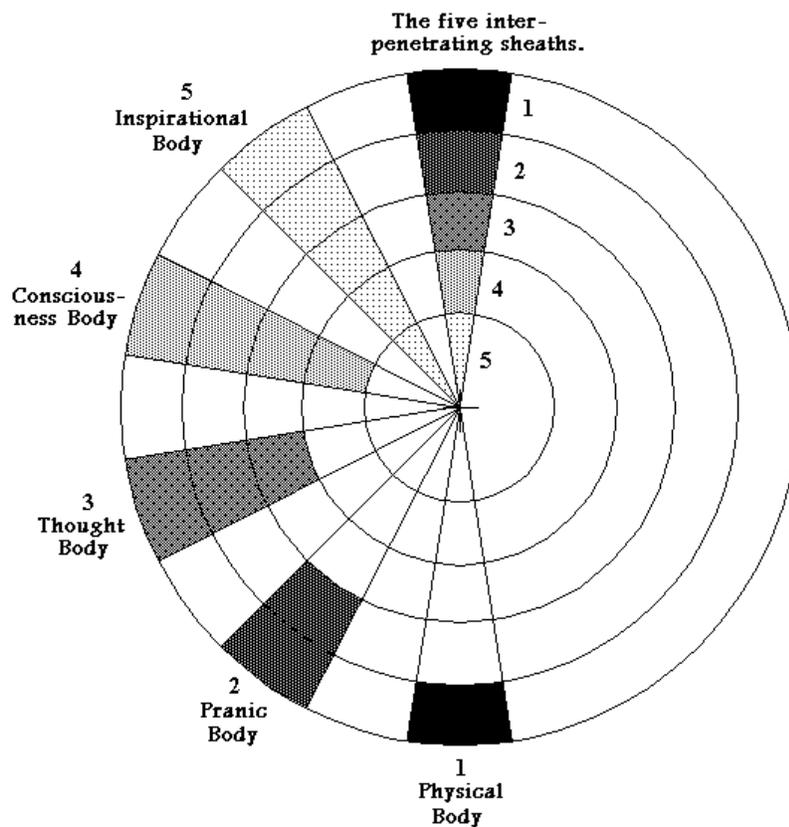
One reason for Govinda’s focus on the heart center as the terminus of the downward movement is the doctrine of the “mediating” role of that center, which “finally becomes the realm of realization on the human plane.”<sup>35</sup> But in transactional logic the “center” of all functional relationship is no individual function, but rather the logical point of organization: TELOS. There is, indeed, a rationale for associating the heart center with TELOS. As stated earlier, TELOS is seen in a transactional system as the basis for the existence of love. The heart has a special relationship to TELOS through its traditional connection with love; but not at the expense of eliminating or devaluing lower functions.

Significantly, Govinda’s version of Figure 7, unlike that shown here, represents the hierarchy of chakras in the manner of the right side of Figure 2, which (as was pointed out there) does not make evident any structure within the chakras that might reveal Analogy of Patterning, but in our Figure 7 a transactional extension of the triple mandala to the lower chakras reveals that lower-level “reflex” yab-yum pairs (circled

crosses) must exist corresponding to the embracing deities of the higher centers; otherwise the Analogy of Patterning is not complete (the *tantra* of *sushumna* is destroyed). What was stated earlier may be said in reverse: The spiritual synthesis that constitutes union with the divine exists in absolute continuity, through the Analogy of Patterning, with the logical synthesis of concepts *and* the biological synthesis of sexual reproduction. By structural analogy alone, the lower functions must draw the arch out to its full extent.

The transactional question raised by the incomplete arch is this: Is there *avoidance* of the lower centers? A tendency to cut them off? One can point to many instances in the doctrine that refute such an idea, but a closer look reveals that there is a tension in Govinda’s interpretation of the doctrine around just this issue. On the one hand, there are repeated assertions that the path of psychic heat follows the full course of *The Return*, even to the “tips of the toes.”<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, there are strong indications that the position of the lower functions is subordinate and not fully complementary. One such case comes to light in Govinda’s description of the “five sheaths,” discussed below.

### The Five Sheaths (Kośas)



**Mandala of the Five Sheaths (Kośas)**

**Figure 8**

We have earlier seen the sheaths, or “bodies,” opposite the chakras at the right center of Figure 2. The sequence, beginning with the “Physical Body” and continuing to the “Inspirational Body” is said to be from greater to lesser “density,” a metaphor satisfying the requirement of Schema 1 that stages of development move from concrete to abstract. Figure 8 is a slightly simplified version of a diagram Govinda

uses to illustrate the relationship of the sheaths. It is another hybrid that attempts to map the schemata of seriality and hierarchy onto the schema of complementarity. The sheaths are distributed about the center of a circle in the manner of Schema 3, suggesting complementarity. They are not arranged as polar opposites, largely because Govinda uses the right side of the circle for another schematic element, brackets, not shown in the figure but explained below.

Govinda at first seems to make up for this by supplying a set of *brackets* in the open right-hand half of the figure (not shown in Figure 8), the first bracket enclosing just the physical sheath and each bracket successively enclosing one more sheath, creating a sequential “overlap” of sheaths somewhat in the manner of the overlapping functions in Schema 2. In Figure 8 instead we have added numbers 1 through 5, such that a simplified version of these brackets may be represented by as a series of “additions” corresponding to the following sequence:<sup>37</sup>

- (1) Physical Body = anna-maya-kośa
- (2 + 1) Pranic Body = prana-maya-kośa
- (3 + 2 + 1) Thought Body = mano-maya-kośa
- (4 + 3 + 2 + 1) Consciousness Body = vijñana-maya-kośa
- (5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1) Inspirational Body = ānanda-maya-kośa

From this it would appear that the “interpenetration” of “bodies” is in accord with the requirement of Schema 2. (The hierarchy moving from the rim of the circle “upward” or “inward” to the center.) But Govinda does not interpret the bracketing as representing true functional complementarity. In a revealing statement he says that the physical body is *not able* to penetrate the other bodies:

**“It is therefore only the spiritual body, born of inspiration...which penetrates all the five layers and thus integrates all organs and faculties of the individual into one complete whole..”<sup>38</sup>**

This contradicts an earlier statement by Govinda that the bodies are *mutually* penetrating. If the penetration is mutual, it cannot be that the direction is one-way only. A one-way penetration, from the higher to the lower functions, is characteristic of platonic dualism, which downgrades the physical world.

In resisting the notion that there is mutual penetration, Govinda appears to be identifying “penetration” with domination, control, or origination instead of developmental continuity. He attributes this control causally to a single function, the “spiritual body,” which “integrates” the other bodies. Apparently aware of the dualistic overtone, Govinda is plainly uneasy about the distancing from the physical body his statement suggests, so he tries to recover the non-dualistic element by the following:

**“Yet, it would be a mistake to underestimate the value and meaning of our physical body...because even though this body is by nature the most limited, in so far as it is *not able to penetrate the other ‘bodies,’* yet, itself it is penetrated by all other ‘bodies’ and thus becomes the natural stage of all spiritual actions and decisions.”<sup>39</sup>**

Nevertheless this paints the physical body as subservient and passive, a “stage” for the spirit, at best a puppet dangling from spiritual strings.<sup>40</sup> This interpretation is reinforced in many places by Govinda, including an account he gives of the downward passage of psychic heat into the lower centers, in which he says the lower centers are made into *tools* of the enlightened consciousness.<sup>41</sup> This is a very ancient dualistic

notion: that the body is merely a vehicle for the spirit, not a fully functioning partner. We find it in the Bhagavad-Gita, where the body is likened to “the chariot,” the soul to “the charioteer.”

In yet another statement which at first glance appears to support full complementarity of functions, Govinda again reveals an undercurrent of subordination:

**“The consciousness of a higher dimension consists in the coordinated and simultaneous perception of several systems of relationship or directions of movement, in a wider, more comprehensive unity, without destroying the individual characteristics of the integrated lower dimensions. The reality of a lower dimension is therefore not annihilated by a higher one, but only ‘relativized’ or put into another perspective of values.”<sup>42</sup>**

On the surface, this appears to be a firm statement of the persistence of the lower functions throughout the developmental structure. On second glance, there is a peculiarity that echoes the idea broached above of the inspirational body as “controlling.” The problem here lies in the identification of the “higher dimension” as the integrating factor rather than TELOS (bindu) which is not a dimension at all, but the logical coordinating principle which alone is the source of unity among functions.

This tension in the tantric system between full functional complementarity on the one hand, and subordination of the lower centers on the other, can be traced to two main sources. First, there are certain illusions created by the imagery itself. Second, there is the question of the role of sexuality in relation to the logic of the schemata.

### Illusions of Imagery

When the metaphor of “interpenetration” is expressed in diagrams by means of layers, as it is in the wedge-shaped sections of Govinda’s diagram, the physical body appears to be restricted to a single layer, while, because of the metaphor of physical “density” to express degrees of abstraction, the inspirational body is given access diagrammatically to all the layers (because of its finer atoms). Thus it is easy to conclude that the physical body is in some literal manner subordinate. But this is an illusion stemming from the limitations of the diagram. It is only under the aspects of hierarchy and seriality that the functions appear to separate in this manner. Under the aspects of complementarity and analogy, the equality of the functions is reasserted. The arch of *The Return* as it extends through the hierarchical presentation is a reminder that the hierarchy is not linear, but developmental and functional in character.

There are actually two ways to exhibit functions as layers of concentric circles, depending upon the choice of function to occupy the center. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate both alternatives and “correct” Govinda’s diagram (from a transactional perspective) by replacing the faulty “brackets” with the arch of *The Return*.

Figure 9, having the point of organization at the center, is a form of Schema 3. This is also the arrangement used by Govinda as seen in Figure 8. In this case however, differing from Govinda’s, the path of *The Return* is from the rim to the center, then back to the rim. Nevertheless a schematic difficulty arises because of the placement of BINDU (TELOS) at the center. In both 8 and 9, the position of the bindu-point appearing to be *within* the fifth body easily leads to a confusion of that body with TELOS.<sup>43</sup> Thus Govinda speaks of the inspirational body as *the* integrating principle, but Transactionally it is TELOS which has this role, and TELOS is not a spiritual “governor” dispensing rules downward; it is the logical organizing principle of the entire reflexive relationship.<sup>44</sup> That is the *transactional* reason that Bindu and Sunyata are described by adjectives such as “incommensurate,” “empty of qualification” and “beyond all definition.”<sup>45</sup>

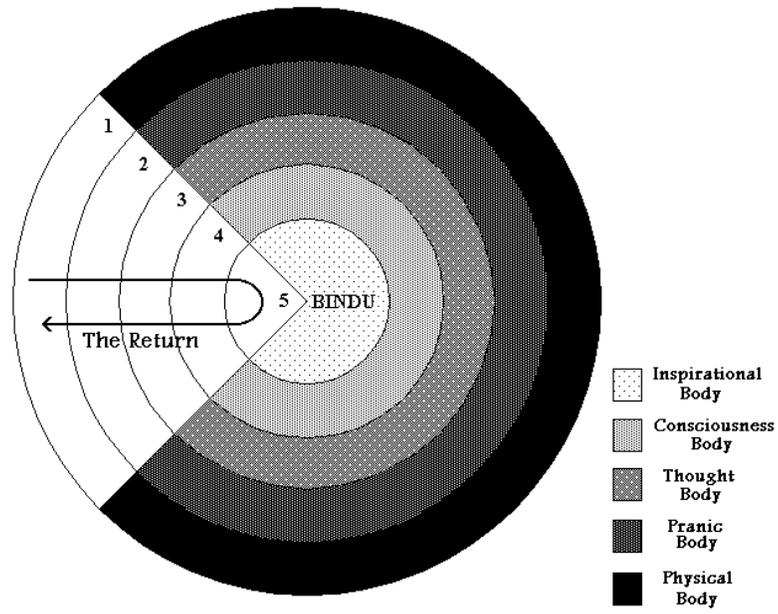


Figure 9

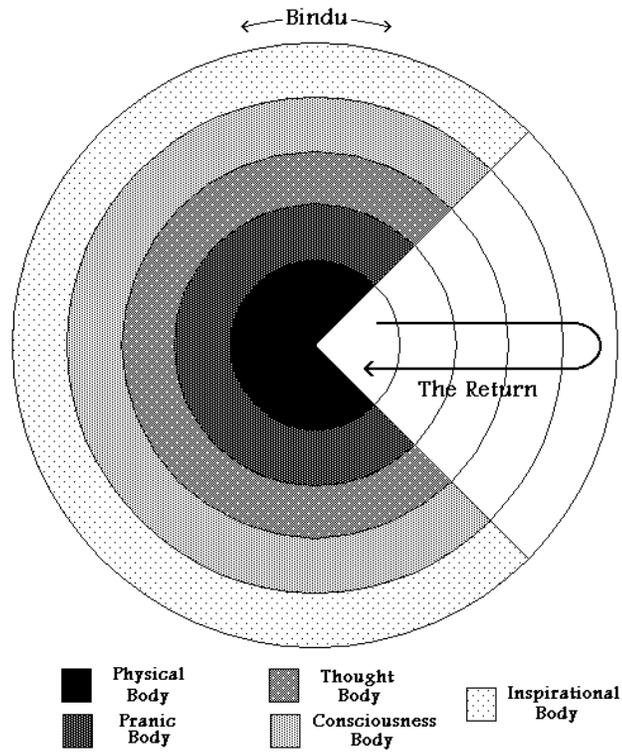


Figure 10

In contrast, a glance at Figure 10 will show that all the bodies, including the fifth, are equally under the organizational influence of Bindu (as TELOS). This mode places the most concrete function in the center and the most abstract at the rim, making the figure essentially a cross-section of Figure 2. In this case the path of *The Return* moves from the center to the rim, then back to the center again. In this mode Bindu is not identified as the fifth layer of the inspirational body, but with the boundary-rim of the circle, which, because of Schema 5, expands indefinitely.

On the transactional model the way in which earlier functions in the developmental sequence “interpenetrate” higher functions is a result of what we have called “functional differentiation in mutual process.” The “lower” functions enter into the higher *as functions* by the dynamic of synthesis. This is the *process-analog* of “interpenetration.” Another way of making this point is to recall that we have identified a backward-and-forward influence of each schema upon the others. The overall governing factor is not any one of the functions but is the TELOS or system organizing function with its connotations of adaptation, dynamism and freedom..

January 17, 2010

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## ENDNOTES

1. “Models of Development in Esoteric and Western Thought” and two supporting papers, “The Transactional Developmental Model,” (parts one and two). The discursive requirements listed there are, in brief summary: a set of functions is arranged in a temporal sequence of development and a hierarchy of complementarity; early terms in the sequence are more concrete and later are more abstract; the principle of continuity among the stages is an analogy expressing the dynamic of synthesis; this dynamic determines an open teleology allowing for adaptation and freedom. The papers are located at <http://www.stanmcdaniel.com/pubs/development/development.html>.
2. Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, Samuel Weiser, N.Y., 1974., page 117. The passage is a quote from the Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch.
3. Govinda, op. cit., page 116.
4. Dewey, John, *Experience and Nature*, Dover Publications N.Y., 1958, p. 261.
5. This is a logical, not a metaphysical, interpretation of *bindu*.
6. Govinda, op. cit., page 118.
7. Govinda, op. cit., page 137.
8. Govinda, op. cit., page 138.
9. Figures 1 and 2 here are also discussed in the paper referenced in endnote 1.
10. The use of the term “aggregation” here is strongly reminiscent of the Aristotelian metaphor of “taking a stand” such that disorganized rout assumes organization around a telic impulse.

11. Govinda, *op. cit.*, pages 153-154. It is likely that *kundalini*, as the “cosmic energy in bodies,” should be associated with the earliest defining function, but there is disagreement in the literature as to the relation between kundalini and prana. In any case, kundalini-sakti is not a focus of attention in vajrayana practice. (See the discussion of kundalini in the section “The Triple Mandala” below.)
12. This corresponds to the awakening of *kundalini*.
13. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 103. Cf. Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrine*, Oxford University Press, London, 1935, page 200.
14. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 156. My italics.
15. The concept of *The Return* is explained in the paper “The Transactional Developmental Model (Part Two)” referenced in endnote 1.
16. The Central Realm is associated with “deep blue space,” *bindu*, “the Divine Mother of Infinite Space,” and the Great Void. Cf. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 117. This figure may be compared with the Rosicrucian mandala of body, soul and spirit linked by “mind” in the center, Figure 2 in the paper referenced in endnote 15.
17. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 180.
18. Evans-Wentz, *op. cit.*, page 108.
19. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 180.
20. See also Govinda, *op. cit.*, pages 182, 204.
21. See the description of Schema 5 in the paper referenced in endnote 1.
22. I am using “Tantra” here in keeping with the root-meaning of the term as *continuity*.
23. “The vertical part of the cross is the phallus and the horizontal the cteis.” Sadhu, Mouni, *The Tarot*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1968, page 45.
24. Govinda, *op. cit.*, pages 198-205.
25. It is a common characteristic of esoteric transactional systems to multiply the schemata by themselves in a kind of recursive expansion of the sort described in this case. Again, the larger system so generated is made up of the elements of the smaller system, thereby repeating the analogy of patterning on a grander scale. See the section on “Dynamic Networks” in “The Transactional Developmental Model (Part Two)” referenced earlier.
26. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 204.
27. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 202.
28. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 201.
29. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 184.
30. See the Ernest Wood and Gurdjieff diagrams as discussed in “The Transactional Developmental Model (Part Two)”
31. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 173.

32. Translated in Woodroffe, John (Arthur Avalon), *The Serpent Power*. Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1964, page 474. (My italics.)
33. Ibid., page 475.
34. Dewey, *op. cit.*, page 7.
35. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 175.
36. In describing the path of “psychic heat” in the Yoga of the Inner Fire, for example, Govinda presents a clear image of the full arch of The Return: The psychic heat rises to the crown chakra, and then, in the form of a white nectar called the Elixir of Life, flows down to “penetrate the whole body.” In fact, it flows as far down as “the tips of the toes.” This process “fuses all polarities.” Govinda, *op. cit.*, pages 173, 160.
37. The method of using numerical addition for this purpose appears also in Ouspensky, P.D., *In Search of the Miraculous*, Harcourt Brace & World, 1949, page 93.
38. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 149.
39. Govinda, *op. cit.*, pages 149-150. (My italics.) Part of the problem here may lie in the materialistic interpretation of “penetrates” on the model of increasingly “finer atoms” as one moves up the scale of abstraction. Since the physical body is made up of the coarser atoms, it is less able to “penetrate” but the finer atoms can “penetrate” the physical body. It is possible that Govinda is taking the metaphor of “coarser and finer atoms” literally as a matter of metaphysical “knowledge.”
40. Matching the thoroughly Christian notion of the material world as the stage for the “Drama of Salvation.”
41. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 177.
42. Govinda, *op. cit.*, page 218.
43. In Kant, the corresponding error is that of confusing the Transcendental Ego with the empirical self. See endnote 24 in Part Two.
44. Dewey is fully aware of the danger involved: “An adherent of [transactional] method can hardly accept either the view which regards subjective mind as an aberration *or that which makes it an independent creative source.*” Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, page 217 (my italics).
45. For precisely the same reason, Kant’s Transcendental Ego is not a substantive entity, but a purely logical function. See endnote 24 in Part Two.