The author was born in the central region of Eastern Tibet, where people trace their ancestry back to the early Tibetan kings. His father, an incarnate lama, was trained in many of the principal spiritual traditions of Tibet, and also served as the village doctor. Tartang Tulku received instruction in areas of study unique to the Nyingmapa (the oldest tradition of Tibetan Buddhism)... Visiting about forty major monasteries, he received instructions from many accomplished masters and learned the general aspects of each center’s meditative traditions...

From the Introduction: “My interest in sharing my background with those in the Western traditions resulted in coming to the US... Many people have shared with me and my family the necessity to preserve the vast heritage of the Tibetan tradition, and it has also been possible to make available a forum for investigating a wide variety of paths to knowledge. Since its founding in 1973, the Nyingma Institute of Berkeley has provided one such forum. Hundreds of trained professionals in the fields of psychology, science, and the humanities have come to the Institute to investigate and research the nature of human existence. As I became more familiar with Western concepts, particularly with those found in the sciences, I saw the possibility of a visionary medium through which a common ground could be found in the pursuits of knowledge carried out by the various sciences and religions. Such a ground could serve to increase each group’s appredation for the other, and could thus even facilitate the quest for knowledge itself... In expressing this vision in ordinary language, it has been necessary to use familiar terms in new ways. For example, ‘space’, ‘time’, and ‘knowledge’ refer to a special range of insights and to subtle facets of appearance... This vision can only be fully viewed when the book is taken as a whole. Here, then it is only possible to give some idea of its aim – that as a unified view of existence, this vision can perhaps make possible the lived-out experience of the full spectrum of human values – of what it means to be a human being... This vision pivots around the terms Space, Time, Knowledge (and Being).

From p.3 (Chapter I. SPACE): Inside or beneath the opacities and hard surfaces which define us and our encounters, there is also space. Intangible, immeasurable psychological spaces constitute the person whose body we see as definite and localized. Macroscopic and microscopic spaces are within every body or object. And all spaces, in turn, seem to be amenable to the presence of objects. Thoughts are ‘within’ mind spaces...

From p.4: ... For any given level of analysis, there is the appearance of ‘objects’ only because a very precise ‘focal setting’ or perspective is maintained. The basic, absolute, or opaque character that some things have for us is due to our unwillingness to change this ‘focal setting’ point of view, or to our assumption that it cannot be done.

AL: a mathematical model for the above ‘focal setting’ is parallelization. The importance of parallelization has been emphasized by Segal (in his 1982 article with Paneitz – see the Course Documents). We will study the notion of a parallelization in Spring. Some of you are already making first steps investigating new parallelizations.
At one time no one even considered penetrating to the ‘inside’ of the atom. But then it was tried and people found enormous spaces and energies there, as well as a new and pervasive understanding of the macroscopic world. New times involve new possibilities, and our present time may allow us to discover new spaces in areas where no one has ever thought to look. For example, it may be possible to discover a kind of space in some intimate connection with each thought, each sensation, each surface, and each conceptual category which constitutes our lived world. The availability of such discoveries is entirely a matter of this particular ‘focal setting’ or perspective we use.

What we perceive as solid or opaque ‘things’, produced by a given ‘setting’, define by contrast what we perceive as the ‘space’ of that level. So, by attending only to the apparently solid things and the contrasting space resulting from one particular ‘setting’, we cannot discover the actual nature of either ‘existence’ or appearance.

Throughout history, we have been maintaining a fixed and limiting ‘focal setting’ without even being aware of doing so. Yet, although our familiar world seems to depend (P. 5, already) upon this ‘setting’, if we become able to change the ‘setting’, fantastic new knowledge and appreciation of life can be gained.

The idea of discovering new spaces may seem at first to be a purely abstract, intellectual endeavor. But in fact it is rooted in the deeply felt need to find an alternative to the sense of restriction and confinement which each of us experiences in our daily lives. This feeling of lack of space, whether on a personal, psychological level or an interpersonal, sociological level, has led to experience of confusion, conflict, imbalance, and general negativity within modern society. We find ourselves setting up strict definitions of territorial boundaries, either as individuals or as larger groups or nations – and great amounts of our energies are utilized in protecting and defending these boundaries. But if we can begin to open our perspective and discover new dimensions of space within our immediate experiences, the anxiety and frustration which results from our sense of limitation will automatically be lessened, and we can increase our ability to relate sensitively and effectively to ourselves, to others, and to our environment.