fr. Evans-Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Dead (1960)

(Evans-Wentz' Introduction:)

annotations.

VI. THE DEATH CEREMONIES

When the death-symptoms, as described in the first sections of our text, are completed, a white cloth is thrown over the face of the corpse; and no person then touches the corpse, in order that the culminating process of death, which ends only upon the complete separation of the *Bardo* body from its earth-plane counterpart, shall not be interfered with. It is commonly held that normally the process takes from three and one-half to four days, unless assisted by a priest called the *hpho-bo* (pron. *pho-o*) or 'extractor of the consciousness-principle'; and that, even if the priest be successful in the extracting, the deceased ordinarily does not wake up to the fact of being separated from the human body until the said period of time has expired.

The *hpho-bo*, upon his arrival, takes a seat on a mat or chair at the head of the corpse; he dismisses all lament-making relatives from the death-chamber and orders its doors and windows to be closed, so as to secure the silence necessary for the right performance of the *hpho-bo* service. This consists of a mystic chant containing directions for the spirit of the deceased to find its way to the Western Paradise of Amitābha, and thus escape—if *karma* permits—the undesirable Intermediate State. After commanding the spirit to quit the body and its attachment to living relatives and goods, the *lāma* examines the crown of the head of the corpse at the line of the sagittal suture, where the two parietal bones articulate, called the 'Aperture of Brahma' (Skt. *Brāhma-randhra*), to determine if the spirit has departed thence, as it should have done; and, if the scalp be not bald, he pulls out a few of the hairs directly over the aperture. If through accident or

otherwise there be no corpse, the *lāma* mentally concentrates upon the deceased, and, visualizing the body of the deceased, imagines it to be present; and, calling the spirit of the deceased, performs the ceremony, which usually lasts about one hour.

Meanwhile, the *tsi-pa*, or astrologer-*lāma*, has been engaged to cast a death-horoscope, based upon the moment of death of the deceased, to determine what persons may approach and touch the corpse, the proper method of disposing of the corpse, the time and manner of the funeral, and the sort of rites to be performed for the benefit of the departed. Then the corpse is tied up in a sitting posture, much the same as that in which mummies and skeletons have been found in ancient graves or tombs in various parts of the world, and sometimes called the embryonic posture, symbolical of being born out of this life into the life beyond death. The corpse, so postured, is then placed in one of the corners of the death-chamber which has not been assigned to the household daemon.

Relatives and friends, having been notified of the death, gather together at the house of the deceased; and there they are fed and lodged until the corpse is disposed of. If doubt exists concerning the complete separation of the consciousness-principle (or spirit) of the deceased from the body, there is not likely to be any disposal of the corpse until three and one-half to four days after the time of the death. So long as the entertaining of the mourners continues—usually for not less than two, but more often for three days—the spirit of the deceased is offered a part of all food, both solid and liquid, of each meal. This food is placed in a bowl in front of the corpse; and then, after the spirit of the deceased has extracted from the food thus offered the subtle invisible essences, the food is thrown away. After the corpse has been removed from the house for final disposal, an effigy of the deceased is put in the corner of the room which the corpse had occupied; and before this effigy food continues thus to be offered until the forty-nine days of the *Bardo* have expired.

Whilst the funeral rites—including the reading of the *Bardo Thödol*—are being performed, in the house of the deceased or

at the place of death, other *lāmas* chant by relays, all day and night, the service for assisting the spirit of the deceased to reach the Western Paradise of Amitābha. In Tibetan, this service (which the *hpho-bo* also chants) is called *De-wa-chan-kyi-mon-lam.* If the family be well-to-do, another service of like nature may be performed at the temple wherein the deceased used to worship, by all of the monks of the temple assembled.

After the funeral, the *lāmas* who read the *Bardo Thödol* return to the house of death once a week until the forty-ninth day of the Intermediate State has ended. It is not uncommon, however, for them to intermit one day of the first week and of each of the succeeding periods in order to shorten the service, so that they return after six, five, four, three, two, and one day respectively, thereby concluding the reading in about three weeks.

From the First to the Fourteenth Day, as the arrangement of Book One of our text suggests, the *Chönyid Bardo* is to be read and re-read, and from the Fifteenth Day onwards the *Sidpa Bardo.* In poorer families the rites may cease after the Fourteenth Day; for families in better circumstances it is usual in Sikkim to continue the rites at least until the expiration of the twenty-one-day period and sometimes during the whole period of the Forty-nine Days of the *Bardo.* On the first day of the funeral rites, if the deceased were a man of wealth or position, as many as one hundred *lāmas* may assist; at the funeral of a poor man only one or two *lāmas* are likely to be present. After the Fourteenth Day, as a rule for all alike, only one *lāma* is retained to complete the reading.

The effigy of the body of the deceased is made by dressing a stool, block of wood, or other suitable object in the clothes of the deceased; and where the face should be there is inserted a printed paper called the *mtshan-spyang* or *spyang-pu* (pronounced *chang-ku*), of which the following reproduction of a specimen is typical:[1]

[1] Our reproduction, made by special permission given to the editor by Dr. L. A. Waddell, is from pl. xxi, *Gazetteer of Sikhim*, edited by H. H. Risley (Calcutta, 1894), section on *Lamaism in Sikhim* by L. A. Waddell.

THE EFFIGY OF THE DEAD PERSON

(1. Mirror. 2. Conch. 3. Lyre. 4. Vase with flowers. 5. Holy Cake.)

In this *spyang-pu*, the central figure represents the deceased with legs bound and in an attitude of adoration, surrounded by symbols of 'the five excellent sensuous things': (1) a mirror (the first of the three objects on the left and numbered 1), symbolical of the body, which reflects all phenomena or sensations, and of sight as well; (2) a conch (numbered 2) and a lyre (numbered 3), symbolical of sound; (3) a vase of flowers (numbered 4), symbolical of smell; (4) holy cakes in a receptacle like that employed at the Roman Catholic Eucharist (numbered 5), symbolical of essence or nutriment, and of taste; (5) the silk clothes of the central figure and the over-hanging royal canopy, symbolical of dress and ornamental art, and of the sense of touch. It is before such a paper figure, inserted in the effigy as a head and face, that the food offerings to the spirit of the deceased continue to be made, and to which, when visualized by the *lāma* as the deceased in person, the *Bardo Thödol* is read.

Having begun my Tibetan researches fresh from three years of research in the ancient funeral lore of the Nile Valley, I realized as soon as I gained knowledge of the Tibetan funeral rites—which are very largely pre-Buddhistic—that the effigy of the dead, as now used in Tibet and Sikkim, is so definitely akin to the effigy of the deceased called 'the statue of the Osiris (or deceased one)', as used in the funeral rites of ancient Egypt, as to suggest a common origin. Furthermore, the *spyang-pu* taken by itself alone, as the head-piece for the effigy, has its Egyptian parallel in the images made for the *Ka* or spirit. These sometimes were merely heads, complete in themselves, to replace or duplicate the head of the mummy and to furnish additional assistance to the *Ka* when seeking—as the Knower in the *Bardo* seeks—a body to rest in, or that which our text calls a prop for the body (see p. 182). And even as to 'the statue of the Osiris' the ancient priests of Egypt read their *Book of the Dead*, so to the Tibetan effigy the *lāmas* now read the *Bardo Thödol*—both treatises alike being nothing more than guide-books for the traveller in the realm beyond death.

Again, the preliminary rituals of the Egyptian funeral were

designed to confer upon the deceased the magic power of rising up in the ghost-body or *Ka* possessed of all sense faculties, the service having consisted of 'the opening of the mouth and eyes' and the restoration of the use of all other parts of the body. Likewise, the *lāmas*' aim, at the outset, is to restore complete consciousness to the deceased after the swoon-state immediately following death, and to accustom him to the unfamiliar environment of the Otherworld, assuming that he be, like the multitude, one of the unenlightened, and thus incapable of immediate emancipation.

In conformity with our own view, that that part of the Tibetan funeral rites directly concerned with the effigy and the *spyang-pu* has come down to our day as a survival from pre-Buddhist, probably very ancient, times, Dr. L. A. Waddell writes of it as follows: 'This is essentially a Bön rite, and is referred to as such in the histories of *Guru* Padma Sambhava, as being practised by the Bön [i. e. the religion prevalent in Tibet before the advent of Buddhism, and, in its transcendentalism, much like Taoism], and as having incurred the displeasure of the *Guru* Padma Sambhava, the founder of Lāmaism.'

Of the *spyang-pu* itself, Dr. Waddell adds: 'Its inscription [as in our copy above] usually runs:

'I, the world-departing One, . . . (and here is inserted the name of the deceased), adore and take refuge in my *lāma*-confessor, and all the deities, both mild [translated by us as "peaceful"] and wrathful;[1] and [may] "the Great Pitier"[2] forgive my accumulated sins and impurities of former lives, and show me the way to another good world!'[3]

At the left shoulder of the central figure of the *spyang-pu*, as in our copy, and sometimes down the middle in other

[1] 'Of the hundred superior deities, forty-two are supposed to be *mild*, and fifty-eight of an angry nature.'—L. A. Waddell.

[2] 'An aboriginal or Chinese deity now identified with *Avalokita*, with whom he has much in common.'—L. A. Waddell.

[3] Our translation is based upon that made by Dr. Waddell; cf. *Gazetteer of Sikhim*, pp. 387-8.

copies, are inscribed phonetic symbols referring to the six worlds of *sangsāric* existence, translated as follows:

S = *sura*, or god, referring to the *deva*-world;
A = *asura*, or titan, referring to the *asura*-world;
Na = *nara*, or man, referring to the human-world;
Tri = *trisan*, or brute animal, referring to the brute-world;
Pre = *preta*, or unhappy ghost, referring to the *preta*-world;
and *Hung* (from *hunu*, meaning 'fallen') = hell, referring to the hell-world.[1]

At the termination of the funeral rites the *spyang-pu* or face-paper is ceremoniously burned in the flame of a butter-lamp, and the spirit of the deceased given a final farewell. By the colour of the flame and the way in which the flame acts the after-death fate which the deceased has met with is determined.

The ashes of the cremated *spyang-pu* are collected in a plate, and then, upon being mixed with clay, are made into miniature stupas called *sa-tschha*, usually in moulds leaving impressions either of symbolical ornamentation or of sacred letters. One is kept for the family altar in the home of the deceased, and the rest are deposited in a sheltered place at a cross-roads or on a hill-top, usually under a projecting ledge of rock, or in a cave if there happens to be a cave.

With the burning of the paper, the rest of the effigy of the deceased is taken apart, the clothes going to the *lāmas*, who carry them off and sell them to the first purchaser, keeping the proceeds as part of their fee. When one year has elapsed after the death, a feast in honour of the deceased is usually given and the service of the Medical Buddhas is performed.[2] Thereafter, a widow of the deceased is free to remarry.[3]

Connected with the Tibetan funeral itself there is much interesting ritual. Thus, when the officiating *lāma* is preparing to assist at the removal of the corpse from the house,

[1] Cf. Waddell, *Gazetteer of Sikhim*, p. 388.

[2] 'In Ceylon, death-feasts are given, to the *Bhikkhus*, seven days, one month, and one year after the death. These feasts are given "in the name of" the dead, to whom also the merit is offered. This, under certain circumstances, helps the dead to attain higher rebirth.'—Cassius A. Pereira.

[3] Cf. Waddell, *Gazetteer of Sikhim*, pp. 391 and 383.

he presents a 'scarf of honour' to the corpse and, addressing the corpse as the deceased, advises it to partake freely of the food offered, warns it that it is dead and that its ghost must not haunt the place or trouble living relatives, saying in conclusion, 'Remember the name of thy spiritual *lāma*-teacher, which is . . . [so and so], and by his aid take the right path—the white one. Come this way!'[1]

Then, as the *lāma* begins to lead the funeral procession, he takes hold of one end of the long scarf, the other end having been tied to the corpse, and begins to chant a liturgy to the accompaniment of a miniature hand-drum (having loose-hanging knotted cords attached, which, striking the drum as it is twirled by the hand of the *lāma*, cause it to sound) and of a trumpet made of a human thigh-bone. When there are a number of priests, the chief priest, going before the rest, rings a handbell (as the Breton priest does in a Breton peasant funeral procession), and the other priests assist with the chanting and the music, one blowing at intervals the sacred conch-shell, another clashing brass cymbals, and perhaps another twirling the small drum, or blowing the thigh-bone trumpet. From time to time the chief *lāma* looks back to invite the spirit to accompany the body and to assure it that the route is in the right direction. After the corpse-bearers come the main body of mourners, some bearing refreshments (to be in part cast on the funeral-pyre for the benefit of the deceased and in part partaken of by the priests and mourners), and last of all the weeping and wailing relatives. Such priestly guiding of the deceased's spirit is for the laity alone, for the spirits of deceased *lāmas*, having been trained in the doctrines of the *Bardo Thödol*, know the right path and need no guidance.

In Tibet itself all known religious methods of disposing of a corpse are in vogue; but, owing to lack of fuel for purposes of cremation, ordinarily the corpse, after having been carried to a hill-top or rocky eminence, is chopped to pieces and, much after the Parsee custom in Persia and Bombay, given to the birds and beasts of prey. If the corpse be that of a nobleman, whose family can well afford

[1] Cf. Waddell, *Gazetteer of Sikhim*, pp. 391 and 383.

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a funeral pyre, it may be cremated. In some remote districts earth burial is customary; and it is commonly employed everywhere when death has been caused by a very contagious and dangerous disease, like small-pox for example. Otherwise, Tibetans generally object to earth burial, for they believe that when a corpse is interred the spirit of the deceased, upon seeing it, attempts to re-enter it, and that if the attempt be successful a vampire results, whereas cremation, or other methods of quickly dissipating the elements of the dead body, prevent vampirism. Sometimes, too, as among the Hindus, corpses are cast into rivers or other bodies of water. In the case of the Dalai Lāma and the Tashi Lāma, and of some very great man or saint, embalming is practised; and the corpse, in a way somewhat resembling the ancient Egyptian embalming process, is packed in a box of marsh salt, usually for about three months, or until the salt has absorbed all the watery parts of the corpse. Then, after the corpse is well cured, it is coated with a cement-like substance made of clay, pulverized sandal-wood, spices, and drugs. This adheres and hardens; and all the sunken or shrivelled parts of the body, such as the eyes, cheeks, and stomach, having been rounded out by it to their natural proportions, a very Egyptian-like mummy is produced. Finally, when thoroughly dried and then covered with a paint made of dissolved gold, the mummy is set up like an image in a sort of Tibetan Westminster Abbey.

At Shigatze, the seat of the Tashi Lāma, there are five such funereal temples. With their double roofs, resplendent with gold, they resemble the palaces or royal shrines of China. In size and embellishment they differ, in accordance with the rank and wealth of the mummies occupying them, some being inlaid with gold, some with silver.[1] Before these enshrined mummies prayer is offered up, incense burnt, and elaborate rituals are performed, as in the ancestral cults of the Chinese and Japanese.

The four Northern Buddhist methods of disposing of a corpse correspond to those mentioned in various of the sacred

[1] Cf. Ekai Kawaguchi, *Three Years in Tibet* (Madras, 1909), p. 394.

books of the Hindus: a human body is said to consist of four elements,—earth, water, air, and fire,—and it should be returned to these elements as quickly as possible. Cremation is considered the best method to adopt. Earth-burial, as among Christians also, is the returning of the body to the element Earth; water-burial is the returning of the body to the element Water, air-burial, to the element Air—the birds which devour the corpse being the denizens of the air; and fire-burial, or cremation, the returning of the body to the element Fire.

When air-burial is adopted in Tibet, even the bones of the corpse, after the birds have stripped them of flesh, are disposed of by being hammered to bits in small cavities in the rocks of the funereal hill, then mixed with flour and formed into a dough and given to the birds to devour.[1] The Tibetan air-burial is thus more thorough than that of the Parsees, who allow the bones of their dead to remain in the air and slowly decompose.

In a Tibetan funeral of the ordinary sort, neither a coffin nor any corpse-receptacle is used. The corpse after being laid upon its back on a sheet or piece of cloth spread over a framework, commonly made of a light material like wicker affixed to two poles, is covered with a pure white cloth. Two men, inserting their heads between the projecting ends of the two poles, act as pall-bearers. In Sikkim, however, the corpse is carried thus sitting, in the embryonic posture described above.

Both in Sikkim and in Tibet every funeral is conducted in strict accordance with the directions which have been given by the astrologer who cast the death-horoscope, indicating who shall touch or handle the corpse, who shall carry it, and the form of the burial. The astrologer also declares what kind of evil spirit caused the death, for in popular belief—as also among the Celtic peoples of Europe—no death is natural, but is always owing to interference by one of the innumerable death-demons. The astrologer announces, too, what ceremonies are necessary to exorcize the death-demon

[1] The men who perform this part of the burial belong to a special caste, and, being regarded as unclean, are ordinarily shunned by other Tibetans.

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from the house of death, what special rituals need to be read for the benefit of the spirit of the deceased, the precautions necessary to secure for the deceased a good rebirth, and the country and sort of family in which the rebirth will occur.

In Sikkim, on the space of ground levelled for the funeral-pyre, a mystic diagram, symbolical of the Happy Realm of Sukhavati, or the Red Western Realm of Happiness (see text, p. 113), is outlined with flour and divided into compartments, the central space (upon which the funeral-pyre is built) being dedicated to the Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha. At the beginning of the cremation ceremonies the chief *lāma* visualizes the funeral-pyre as being the *maṇḍala* of Amitābha, and the fire as being Amitābha, who, as in our text (see p. 113), personifies the element Fire. Then the corpse itself, when laid upon the pyre, is visualized as the *maṇḍala* of Amitābha and its heart as the dwelling-place of Amitābha. As the fire begins to grow in volume, sweet-smelling oils and spices and sandal-wood and incense-sticks are cast into it in sacrifice, as in the Hindu ritual of *Homa*, or sacrifice to fire. Finally, as the cremation ceremonies end, the priests and the mourners visualize the spirit of the departed as being purged of all *karmic* obscurations by the fire which is Amitābha, the Incomprehensible Light.

Such, in brief, is the mysticism underlying the beautiful rites performed for the dead at the place of cremation in Sikkim.

In all other forms of burial, throughout Tibet or territories under Tibetan influence, a parallel or corresponding funeral service, based on the same symbolical rituals, is performed, with variations according to sect and province.

VII. THE *BARDO*[1] OR AFTER-DEATH STATE

From the moment of death and for three and one-half or sometimes four days afterwards, the Knower, or principle of

[1] *Bar-do* literally means 'between (*Bar*) two (*do*)', i.e. 'between two [states]'—the state between death and rebirth—and, therefore, 'Intermediate' or 'Transitional [State]'. The translator, in certain instances, favoured 'Uncertain [State]' as its English rendering. It might also be rendered as 'Twilight [State]'.

consciousness, in the case of the ordinary person deceased, is believed to be thus in a sleep or trance-state, unaware, as a rule, that it has been separated from the human-plane body. This period is the First *Bardo*, called the *Chikhai Bardo* (Tib. *Hchi-khahi Bar-do*), or 'Transitional State of the Moment of Death', wherein dawns the Clear Light, first in primordial purity, then the percipient, being unable to recognize it, that is to say, to hold on to and remain in the transcendental state of the unmodified mind concomitant with it, perceives it *karmically* obscured, which is its secondary aspect. When the First *Bardo* ends, the Knower, awakening to the fact that death has occurred, begins to experience the Second *Bardo*, called the *Chönyid Bardo* (Tib. *Chös-nyid Bar-do*), or 'Transitional State of [the Experiencing or Glimpsing of] Reality'; and this merges into the Third *Bardo*, called the *Sidpa* (or *Sidpai*) *Bardo* (Tib. *Srid-pahi Bar-do*), or 'Transitional State of [or while seeking] Rebirth', which ends when the principle of consciousness has taken rebirth in the human or some other world, or in one of the paradise realms.

As explained in Section III, above, the passing from one *Bardo* to another is analogous to the process of birth; the Knower wakes up out of one swoon or trance state and then another, until the Third *Bardo* ends. On his awakening in the Second *Bardo*, there dawn upon him in symbolic visions, one by one, the hallucinations created by the *karmic* reflexes of actions done by him in the earth-plane body. What he has thought and what he has done become objective: thought-forms, having been consciously visualized and allowed to take root and grow and blossom and produce, now pass in a solemn and mighty panorama, as the consciousness-content of his personality.[1]

In the Second *Bardo*, the deceased is, unless otherwise enlightened, more or less under the delusion that although

[1] Some of the more learned *lāmas*—chiefly of the Gelugpa, or Yellow-Hat Sect—believe that the highly symbolic visions of the one hundred and ten principal deities of the *Chönyid Bardo* are seen only by devotees of some spiritual advancement who have studied Tantricism; and that the ordinary spiritual advancement who have studied Tantricism; and that the ordinary person when deceased will have visions more like those described in the *Sidpa Bardo*.

he is deceased he still possesses a body like the body of flesh and blood. When he comes to realize that really he has no such body, he begins to develop an overmastering desire to possess one; and, seeking for one, the *karmic* predilection for *sangsāric* existence naturally becoming all-determining, he enters into the Third *Bardo* of seeking Rebirth, and eventually, with his rebirth in this or some other world, the after-death state comes to an end.

For the commonalty, this is the normal process; but for those very exceptional minds, possessed of great *yogīc* knowledge and enlightenment, only the more spiritual stages of the *Bardo* of the first few days will be experienced; the most enlightened of *yogīs* may escape all of the *Bardo*, passing into a paradise realm, or else reincarnating in this world as soon as the human body has been discarded, maintaining all the while unbroken continuity of consciousness.[1] As men think, so are they, both here and hereafter, thoughts being things, the parents of all actions, good and bad alike; and, as the sowing has been, so will the harvest be.

If escape from the Intermediate State is not achieved, through rebirth into some other state—that of Hell being possible for the very exceptional evil-doer, though not for the ordinary person, who expiates normal moral delinquencies upon being reborn as a human being—within the symbolic period of Forty-nine Days, a period whose actual duration is determined by *karma*, the deceased remains subject to all the *karmic* illusions of the *Bardo*, blissful or miserable as the case may be, and progress is impossible. Apart from liberation by gaining *Nirvāṇa* after death—thus cutting asunder for ever the *karmic* bonds of worldly or *sangsāric* existence in an illusionary body of propensities—the only hope for the ordinary person of reaching Buddhahood lies in being reborn as a human being; for birth in any other than the human world causes delay for one desirous of reaching the Final Goal.

[1] 'This is borne out in the Pali *Ti-Pitaka*, which records several instances of high *deva* rebirth immediately after death on the human plane.'—Cassius A. Pereira.

VIII. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE *BARDO* VISIONS

Definite psychological significance attaches to each of the deities appearing in the *Bardo Thödol*; but, in order to grasp it, the student must bear in mind that—as suggested above—the apparitional visions seen by the deceased in the Intermediate State are not visions of reality, but nothing more than the hallucinatory embodiments of the thought-forms born of the mental-content of the percipient; or, in other words, they are the intellectual impulses which have assumed personified form in the after-death dream-state.

Accordingly, the Peaceful Deities (Tib. *Z'i-wa*) are the personified forms of the sublimest human sentiments, which proceed from the psychic heart-centre. As such, they are represented as the first to dawn, because, psychologically speaking, the heart-born impulses precede the brain-born impulses. They come in peaceful aspect to control and to influence the deceased whose connexion with the human world has just been severed; the deceased has left relatives and friends behind, works unaccomplished, desires unsatisfied, and, in most cases, he possesses a strong yearning to recover the lost opportunity afforded by human embodiment for spiritual enlightenment. But, in all his impulses and yearnings, *karma* is all-masterful; and, unless it be his *karmic* lot to gain liberation in the first stages, he wanders downwards into the stages wherein the heart-impulses give way to brain-impulses.

Whereas the Peaceful Deities are the personifications of the feelings, the Wrathful Deities (Tib. *T'o-wo*) are the personifications of the reasonings and proceed from the psychic brain-centre. Yet, just as impulses arising in the heart-centre may transform themselves into the reasonings of the brain-centre, so the Wrathful Deities are the Peaceful Deities in a changed aspect.

As the intellect comes into activity, after the sublime heart-born impulses subside, the deceased begins to realize more and more the state in which he is; and with the supernormal faculties of the *Bardo*-body which he begins to make use of—

in much the same manner as an infant new-born in the human world begins to employ the human plane sense-faculties—he is enabled to think how he may win this or that state of existence. *Karma* is, however, still his master, and defines his limitations. As on the human plane the sentimental impulses are most active in youth and often lost in mature life, wherein reason commonly takes the place of them, so on the after-death plane, called the *Bardo*, the first experiences are happier than the later experiences.

From another aspect, the chief deities themselves are the embodiments of universal divine forces, with which the deceased is inseparably related, for through him, as being the microcosm of the macrocosm, penetrate all impulses and forces, good and bad alike. Samanta-Bhadra, the All-Good, thus personifies Reality, the Primordial Clear Light of the Unborn, Unshaped *Dharma-Kāya* (cf. p. 95). Vairochana is the Originator of all phenomena, the Cause of all Causes. As the Universal Father, Vairochana manifests or spreads forth as seed, or semen, all things; his *shakti*, the Mother of Great Space, is the Universal Womb into which the seed falls and evolves as the world-systems. Vajra-Sattva symbolizes Immutability. Ratna-Sambhava is the Beautifier, the Source of all Beauty in the Universe. Amitābha is Infinite Compassion and Love Divine, the *Christos*. Amogha-Siddhi is the personification of Almighty Power or Omnipotence. And the minor deities, heroes, *ḍākinīs* (or 'fairies'), goddesses, lords of death, *rākṣhasas*, demons, spirits, and all others, correspond to definite human thoughts, passions, and impulses, high and low, human and sub-human and superhuman, in *karmic* form, as they take shape from the seeds of thought forming the percipient's consciousness-content (cf. p. 219).

As the *Bardo Thödol* text makes very clear by repeated assertions, none of all these deities or spiritual beings has any real individual existence any more than have human beings: 'It is quite sufficient for thee [i.e. the deceased percipient] to know that these apparitions are [the reflections of] thine own thought-forms' (p. 104). They are merely the consciousness-content visualized, by *karmic* agency, as apparitional appearances in the Intermediate State—airy nothings woven into dreams.

The complete recognition of this psychology by the deceased sets him free into Reality. Therefore is it that the *Bardo Thödol*, as the name implies, is The Great Doctrine of Liberation by Hearing and by Seeing.

The deceased human being becomes the sole spectator of a marvellous panorama of hallucinatory visions; each seed of thought in his consciousness-content *karmically* revives; and he, like a wonder-struck child watching moving pictures cast upon a screen, looks on, unaware, unless previously an adept in *yoga*, of the non-reality of what he sees dawn and set.

At first, the happy and glorious visions born of the seeds of the impulses and aspirations of the higher or divine nature awe the uninitiated; then, as they merge into the visions born of the corresponding mental elements of the lower or animal nature, they terrify him, and he wishes to flee from them; but, alas, as the text explains, they are inseparable from himself, and to whatsoever place he may wish to flee they will follow him.

It is not necessary to suppose that all the dead in the Intermediate State experience the same phenomena, any more than all the living do in the human world, or in dreams. The *Bardo Thödol* is merely typical and suggestive of all after-death experiences. It merely describes in detail what is assumed will be the *Bardo* visualizations of the consciousness-content of the ordinary devotee of the Red Hat School of Padma Sambhava. As a man is taught, so he believes. Thoughts being things, they may be planted like seeds in the mind of the child and completely dominate his mental content. Given the favourable soil of the will to believe, whether the seed-thoughts be sound or unsound, whether they be of pure superstition or of realizable truth, they take root and flourish, and make the man what he is mentally.

Accordingly, for a Buddhist of some other School, as for a Hindu, or a Moslem, or a Christian, the *Bardo* experiences would be appropriately different: the Buddhist's or the Hindu's thought-forms, as in a dream state, would give rise to corresponding visions of the deities of the Buddhist or Hindu

pantheon; a Moslem's, to visions of the Moslem Paradise; a Christian's, to visions of the Christian Heaven, or an American Indian's to visions of the Happy Hunting Ground. And, similarly, the materialist will experience after-death visions as negative and as empty and as deityless as any he ever dreamt while in the human body. Rationally considered, each person's after-death experiences, as the *Bardo Thödol* teaching implies, are entirely dependent upon his or her own mental content. In other words, as explained above, the after-death state is very much like a dream state, and its dreams are the children of the mentality of the dreamer. This psychology scientifically explains why devout Christians, for example, have had—if we are to accept the testimony of Christian saints and seers—visions (in a trance or dream state, or in the after-death state) of God the Father seated on a throne in the New Jerusalem, and of the Son at His side, and of all the Biblical scenery and attributes of Heaven, or of the Virgin and Saints and Archangels, or of Purgatory and Hell.

In other words, the *Bardo Thödol* seems to be based upon verifiable data of human physiological and psychological experiences; and it views the problem of the after-death state as being purely a psycho-physical problem; and is, therefore, in the main, scientific. It asserts repeatedly that what the percipient on the *Bardo* plane sees is due entirely to his own mental-content; that there are no visions of gods or of demons, of heavens or of hells, other than those born of the hallucinatory *karmic* thought-forms constituting his personality, which is an impermanent product arising from the thirst for existence and from the will to live and to believe.

From day to day the *Bardo* visions change, concomitant with the eruption of the thought-forms of the percipient, until their *karmic* driving force exhausts itself; or, in other words, the thought-forms, born of habitual propensities, being mental records comparable as has already been suggested to records on a cinema-film, their reel running to its end, the after-death state ends, and the Dreamer, emerging from the womb, begins to experience anew the phenomena of the human world.

The *Bible* of the Christians, like the *Koran* of the Moslems, never seems to consider that the spiritual experiences in the form of hallucinatory visions by prophet or devotee, reported therein, may, in the last analysis, not be real. But the *Bardo Thödol* is so sweeping in its assertions that it leaves its reader with the clear-cut impression that every vision, without any exception whatsoever, in which spiritual beings, gods or demons, or paradises or places of torment and purgation play a part, in a *Bardo* or any *Bardo*-like dream or ecstasy, is purely illusionary, being based upon *sangsāric* phenomena.

The whole aim of the *Bardo Thödol* teaching, as otherwise stated elsewhere, is to cause the Dreamer to awaken into Reality, freed from all the obscurations of *karmic* or *sangsāric* illusions, in a supramundane or *Nirvāṇic* state, beyond all phenomenal paradises, heavens, hells, purgatories, or worlds of embodiment. In this way, then, it is purely Buddhistic and unlike any non-Buddhist book in the world, secular or religious.

IX. THE JUDGEMENT

The Judgement Scene as described in our text and that described in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* seem so much alike in essentials as to suggest that common origin, at present unknown, to which we have already made reference. In the Tibetan version, Dharma-Rāja (Tib. *Shinje-chho-gyal*) King of the Dead (commonly known to Theravādists as Yama-Rāja), the Buddhist and Hindu Pluto, as a Judge of the Dead, corresponds to Osiris in the Egyptian version. In both versions alike there is the symbolical weighing: before Dharma-Rāja there are placed on one side of the balance black pebbles and on the other side white pebbles, symbolizing evil and good deeds; and similarly, before Osiris, the heart and the feather (or else in place of the feather an image of the Goddess of Truth which it symbolizes) are weighed one against the other, the heart representing the conduct or conscience of the deceased and the feather righteousness or truth.

In the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the deceased, addressing his heart, says: 'Raise not thyself in evidence against me.

Be not mine adversary before the Divine Circle; let there be no fall of the scale against me in the presence of the great god, Lord of Amenta.' In the Egyptian Judgement Scene it is the ape-headed (less commonly the ibis-headed) Thoth, god of wisdom, who supervises the weighing; in the Tibetan Judgement Scene it is the monkey-headed Shinje; and in both scenes there is the jury of deities looking on, some animal-headed, some human-headed.[1] In the Egyptian version there is a monstrous creature waiting to devour the deceased should the deceased be condemned, whilst in the Tibetan version devils wait to conduct the evil-doer to the hell-world of purgation; and the record-board which Thoth is sometimes depicted as holding corresponds to the Mirror of *Karma* held by Dharma-Rāja or, as in some versions, by one of the divine jury. Furthermore, in both Books of the Dead, the deceased when first addressing the Judge pleads that he has done no evil. Before Osiris, this plea seems to be accepted in all the texts now known; before Dharma-Rāja it is subject to the test of the Mirror of *Karma*, and this seems to be distinctly an Indian and Buddhist addition to the hypothetical pre-historic version, whence arose the Egyptian and the Tibetan versions, the Egyptian being the less affected.

Plato, too, in recording the other-world adventures of Er, in the tenth book of the *Republic*, describes a similar Judgement, in which there are judges and *karmic* record-boards (affixed to the souls judged) and paths—one for the good, leading to Heaven, one for the evil, leading to Hell—and demons waiting to take the condemned souls to the place of punishment, quite as in the *Bardo Thödol* (see p. 49).[2]

[1] Such animal-headed deities as appear in the *Bardo Thödol* are, for the most part, derived from the pre-Buddhistic religion of Tibet called Bön, and, therefore, probably of very great antiquity. Like their Egyptian parallels, they seem to be more or less totemistic; and, through their impersonation by masked priests, as in the Ancient Egyptian Mysteries and surviving Tibetan mystery plays, may be—as our text also suggests—symbolic of definite attributes, passions, and propensities of *sangsāric*, or embodied, beings—human, sub-human, and superhuman. (See p. 140[1].)

[2] The student is here referred to Section VII of our Addenda (pp. 238–41), concerning the Christianized version of the Judgement contained in the curious medieval treatise entitled *The Lamentation of the Dying Creature*.

The purgatorial lore now Christianized and associated with St. Patrick in the originally pagan St. Patrick's Purgatory in Ireland, the whole cycle of Otherworld and Rebirth legends of the Celtic peoples connected with their Fairy-Faith, and similar Proserpine lore recorded in the Sacred Books of mankind the world over, as well as the Semitic doctrines of heaven and hell and judgement, and of resurrection as the Christianized corruption of a pre-Christian and Jewish rebirth doctrine, as also the passage in Plato, all testify to beliefs universal among mankind, probably far older than the oldest of ancient records from Babylon or from Egypt.[1]

The painting of the Tibetan Judgement Scene as reproduced herein (see opposite p. 166) was made, in strict accord with monastic tradition, in Gangtok, Sikkim, during the year 1919, by Lharipa-Pempa-Tendup-La, a Tibetan artist then sojourning there. An early prototype of it was, until quite recently, preserved as one of the old frescoes contained within the pictorial Wheel of Life of the Tashiding temple-picture in Sikkim, which Dr. L. A. Waddell has described as follows: 'The judgement is in every case meted out by the impartial *Shinje-chho-gyal* or "Religious King of the Dead" [*Dharma-Rāja*], a form of *Yama*, the Hindu god of the dead, who holds a mirror in which the naked soul is reflected, while his servant *Shinje* weighs out in scales the good as opposed to the bad deeds; the former being represented by white pebbles, and the latter by black.'[2] And Dr. Waddell has traced back

[1] In my *Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (Oxford, 1911), Chapter X, I have suggested how very probable it is that the purgatorial lore which centred about the cavern for mystic pagan initiations formerly existing on an island in Loch Derg, Ireland, at what is now the famous place of Catholic pilgrimage called St. Patrick's Purgatory, gave rise to the doctrine of Purgatory in the Roman Church. The original purgatorial cavern was demolished, by order of the English Government in Ireland, to destroy, as was said, pagan superstition.

Furthermore, the subterranean places of worship and initiation, dedicated to the Sun-God Mithras, still preserved as ancient remains throughout the Southern European countries, bear such close resemblance to the original Irish Purgatory—as to other underground places of initiation in Celtic countries like New Grange in Ireland and Gavrinis in Brittany—as to indicate a common prehistoric origin, essentially religious and connected with a cult of the *Bardo*-world and its inhabitants.

[2] Cf. *The Gazetteer of Sikhim*, ed. by H. H. Risley, p. 269.

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the origin of the picture to a similar Wheel of Life, commonly, though incorrectly, known as 'the Zodiac' in the verandah of the Ajaṇṭā Cave No. XVII, India. (See p. 56.) This, then, establishes the antiquity of the Judgement Scene, of which our text contains one version.

Throughout the canonical and apocryphal literature of Northern Buddhism other versions are numerous. In the Pali canon of Southern Buddhism there are parallel versions, for example in the *Devadūta Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, and in the *Devadūta Sūttam* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The latter version may be summarized as follows: The Exalted One, the Buddha, while sojourning at the Jetavana Monastery, addresses the monks assembled therein concerning the after-death state of existence. Like a man of clear vision, sitting between two houses, each with six doors, He beholds all who come and go; the one house symbolizing the *Bardo* or state of disembodied existence, the other the embodied state of existence, and the twelve doors the six entrances and the six exits of the six *lokas*. Then, after explaining the manner in which *karma* governs all states of existence, the Buddha describes how the evil-doer is brought before the King of Death and questioned about the Five Messengers of Death.

The first messenger is symbolized by a new-born babe lying on its back; and the message is that even for it, as for all living creatures, old age and death are inevitable. The second messenger comes in the guise of an aged person, eighty, ninety, or a hundred years of age, decrepit, crooked as the curved rafter of a gabled roof, leaning on a staff, trembling as he walks, pathetically miserable, with youth entirely gone, broken-toothed, grey-haired and nearly bald, and with wrinkled brow; and his message is that the babe but grows up and matures and decays to become a victim of Death. The third messenger, a person confined by illness, rolling in his own filth, unable to rise or to lie down without the aid of an attendant, brings the message that disease, too, is inevitable, even as death. The fourth messenger, a thief undergoing most terrible punishment, bears the message that the punishment for evil-doing in this world is as nothing compared to the punishment which *karma* inflicts after death. The fifth messenger, to emphasize the same message of death and the corruptibility of the body, is a corpse, swollen, discoloured, and putrid.

In each instance, King Yama asks the deceased if he had seen the messenger and receives the reply, 'No'. Then the King explains to him who the messenger was and the meaning of the messages; and the deceased, thereby remembering, is obliged to confess that, not having done good deeds, he had not acted upon the messages, but had done evil instead, forgetting the inevitability of death. Thereupon, Yama pronounces the judgement, that since the deceased had failed to do good he must suffer the *karmic* consequences. Accordingly, the hell-furies take the deceased and cause him to suffer five sorts of purgatorial punishments; and, though he suffers most unbearable pains, he is, as the *Bardo Thödol* makes clear, incapable of dying

In the *Anguttara Nikāya* version, wherein there are but three messengers, the aged person, the man or woman overcome with disease, and the corpse, the Buddha concludes the discourse thus:

'If men who have been warned by heavenly messengers have been indifferent as regards religion they suffer long, being born in a low condition.

'If virtuous men have been warned by heavenly messengers in this world, they do not neglect to profess the holy doctrines. Seeing the danger of attachment, which is the cause of birth and death, they have in this life extinguished the miseries of existence by arriving at a condition free from fear, happy and free from passions and sins.'[1]

X. THE REBIRTH DOCTRINE

In examining the Rebirth Doctrine, more particularly as it presents itself in our text, two interpretations must be taken into account: the literal or exoteric interpretation,

[1] Cf. translation by E. R. J. Gooneratne, *Anguttara Nikāya, Eka Duka and Tika Nipāta* (Galle, Ceylon, 1913), pp. 160–5.

THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

By Dr. C. G. Jung[1]

Translated by R. F. C. Hull from *Das Tibetanische Totenbuch*

Before embarking upon the psychological commentary, I should like to say a few words about the text itself. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, or the *Bardo Thödol*, is a book of instructions for the dead and dying. Like *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, it is meant to be a guide for the dead man during the period of his *Bardo* existence, symbolically described as an intermediate state of forty-nine days' duration between death and rebirth. The text

1 To one of Dr. Jung's most successful disciples, Dr. James Kirsch, Analytical Psychologist, of Los Angeles, California, who has discussed this Psychological Commentary with Dr. Jung in Zürich and aided in its English translation, the Editor is indebted for the important prefatory admonition which follows, addressed to the Oriental reader:—

'This book addresses itself, primarily, to the Occidental reader, and attempts to describe important Oriental experiences and conceptions in Occidental terms. Dr. Jung seeks to facilitate this difficult undertaking by his Psychological Commentary. It is, therefore, unavoidable that, in so doing, he employs terms which are familiar to the Occidental mind but which are, in some instances, objectionable to the Oriental mind.

'One such objectionable term is "soul". According to Buddhistic belief, the "soul" is ephemeral, is an illusion, and, therefore, has no real existence. The Germanic word "*Seele*", as employed in the original German version of this Psychological Commentary, is not synonymous with the English word "Soul", although commonly so translated. "*Seele*" is an ancient word, sanctioned by Germanic tradition and used, by outstanding German mystics like Eckhart and great German poets like Goethe, to signify the Ultimate Reality, symbolized in feminine, or *shakti*, aspect. Herein, Dr. Jung uses it poetically with reference to the "Psyche", as the Collective Psyche. In psychological language it represents the Collective Unconscious, as being the matrix of everything. It is the womb of everything, even of the *Dharma-Kāya*; it is the *Dharma-Kāya* itself.

'Accordingly, Oriental readers are invited to put aside, for the time being, their understanding of "soul" and to accept Dr. Jung's use of the word, in order to be able to follow him with an open mind into the depths where he seeks to build a bridge from the Shore of the Orient to the Shore of the Occident, and to tell of the various paths leading to the Great Liberation, the *Una Salus*.'

falls into three parts. The first part, called *Chikhai Bardo*, describes the psychic happenings at the moment of death. The second part, or *Chönyid Bardo*, deals with the dream-state which supervenes immediately after death, and with what are called '*karmic* illusions'. The third part, or *Sidpa Bardo*, concerns the onset of the birth-instinct and of prenatal events. It is characteristic that supreme insight and illumination, and hence the greatest possibility of attaining liberation, are vouchsafed during the actual process of dying. Soon afterward, the 'illusions' begin which lead eventually to reincarnation, the illuminative lights growing ever fainter and more multifarious, and the visions more and more terrifying. This descent illustrates the estrangement of consciousness from the liberating truth as it approaches nearer and nearer to physical rebirth. The purpose of the instruction is to fix the attention of the dead man, at each successive stage of delusion and entanglement, on the ever-present possibility of liberation, and to explain to him the nature of his visions. The text of the *Bardo Thödol* is recited by the *lāma* in the presence of the corpse.

I do not think I could better discharge my debt of thanks to the two previous translators of the *Bardo Thödol*, the late Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdup and Dr. Evans-Wentz, than by attempting, with the aid of a psychological commentary, to make the magnificent world of ideas and the problems contained in this treatise a little more intelligible to the Western mind. I am sure that all who read this book with open eyes, and who allow it to impress itself upon them without prejudice, will reap a rich reward.

The *Bardo Thödol*, fitly named by its editor, Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, 'The Tibetan Book of the Dead', caused a considerable stir in English-speaking countries at the time of its first appearance in 1927. It belongs to that class of writings which are not only of interest to specialists in Mahāyāna Buddhism, but which also, because of their deep humanity and their still deeper insight into the secrets of the human psyche, make an especial appeal to the layman who is seeking to broaden his knowledge of life. For years, ever since it was first published, the *Bardo Thödol* has been my constant companion, and to it I owe not only many stimulating ideas and discoveries, but also many fundamental insights. Unlike *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, which always prompts one

to say too much or too little, the *Bardo Thödol* offers one an intelligible philosophy addressed to human beings rather than to gods or primitive savages. Its philosophy contains the quintessence of Buddhist psychological criticism; and, as such, one can truly say that it is of an unexampled superiority. Not only the 'wrathful' but also the 'peaceful' deities are conceived as *sangsāric* projections of the human psyche, an idea that seems all too obvious to the enlightened European, because it reminds him of his own banal simplifications. But though the European can easily explain away these deities as projections, he would be quite incapable of positing them at the same time as real. The *Bardo Thödol* can do that, because, in certain of its most essential metaphysical premises, it has the enlightened as well as the unenlightened European at a disadvantage. The ever-present, unspoken assumption of the *Bardo Thödol* is the antinominal character of all metaphysical assertions, and also the idea of the qualitative difference of the various levels of consciousness and of the metaphysical realities conditioned by them. The background of this unusual book is not the niggardly European 'either-or', but a magnificently affirmative 'both-and'. This statement may appear objectionable to the Western philosopher, for the West loves clarity and unambiguity; consequently, one philosopher clings to the position, 'God is', while another clings equally fervently to the negation. 'God is not'. What would these hostile brethren make of an assertion like the following:

> 'Recognizing the voidness of thine own intellect to be Buddhahood, and knowing it at the same time to be thine own consciousness, thou shalt abide in the state of the divine mind of the Buddha.'

Such an assertion is, I fear, as unwelcome to our Western philosophy as it is to our theology. The *Bardo Thödol* is in the highest degree psychological in its outlook; but, with us, philosophy and theology are still in the mediaeval, pre-psychological stage where only the assertions are listened to, explained, defended, criticized and disputed, while the authority that makes them has, by general consent, been deposed as outside the scope of discussion.

Metaphysical assertions, however, are *statements of the psyche*, and are therefore psychological. To the Western mind, which compensates its well-known feelings of resentment by a slavish

regard for 'rational' explanations, this obvious truth seems all too obvious, or else it is seen as an inadmissible negation of metaphysical 'truth'. Whenever the Westerner hears the word 'psychological', it always sounds to him like '*only* psychological'. For him the 'soul' is something pitifully small, unworthy, personal, subjective, and a lot more besides. He therefore prefers to use the word 'mind' instead, though he likes to pretend at the same time that a statement which may in fact be very subjective indeed is made by the 'mind', naturally by the 'Universal Mind', or even—at a pinch—by the 'Absolute' itself. This rather ridiculous presumption is probably a compensation for the regrettable smallness of the soul. It almost seems as if Anatole France had uttered a truth which were valid for the whole Western world when, in his *Penguin Island*, Cathérine d'Alexandrie offers this advice to God: '*Donnez leur une ame, mais une petite*'! ['Give them a soul, but a little one!']

It is the soul which, by the divine creative power inherent in it, makes the metaphysical assertion; it posits the distinctions between metaphysical entities. Not only is it the condition of all metaphysical reality, it *is* that reality.[1]

With this great psychological truth the *Bardo Thödol* opens. The book is not a ceremonial of burial, but a set of instructions for the dead, a guide through the changing phenomena of the *Bardo* realm, that state of existence which continues for 49 days after death until the next incarnation. If we disregard for the moment the supra-temporality of the soul—which the East accepts as a self-evident fact—we, as readers of the *Bardo Thödol*, shall be able to put ourselves without difficulty in the position of the dead man, and shall consider attentively the teaching set forth in the opening section, which is outlined in the quotation above. At this point, the following words are spoken, not presumptuously, but in a courteous manner:—

'O nobly-born (so and so), listen. Now thou art experiencing the Radiance of the Clear Light of Pure Reality. Recognize it. O nobly-born, thy present intellect, in real nature void, not

[1]This paragraph makes apparent the interpretative importance of the annotation set forth above, page xxxv, concerning the difference in meaning of the term 'soul' of the English rendering and of the term '*Seele*' of the original German; and, at this point, readers would benefit by re-reading the annotation.

formed into anything as regards characteristics or colour, naturally void, is the very Reality, the All-Good.

'Thine own intellect, which is now voidness, yet not to be regarded as of the voidness of nothingness, but as being the intellect itself, unobstruced, shining, thrilling, and blissful, is the very consciousness, the All-good Buddha.'

This realization is the *Dharma-Kāya* state of perfect enlightenment; or, as we should express it in our own language, the creative ground of all metaphysical assertion is consciousness, as the invisible, intangible manifestation of the soul. The 'Voidness' is the state transcendent over all assertion and all predication. The fulness of its discriminative manifestations still lies latent in the soul.

The text continues:—

'Thine own consciousness, shining, void, and inseparable from the Great Body of Radiance, hath no birth, nor death, and is the Immutable Light—Buddha Amitābha.'

The soul [or, as here, one's own consciousness] is assuredly not small, but the radiant Godhead itself. The West finds this statement either very dangerous, if not downright blasphemous, or else accepts it unthinkingly and then suffers from a theosophical inflation. Somehow we always have a wrong attitude to these things. But if we can master ourselves far enough to refrain from our chief error of always wanting to *do* something with things and put them to practical use, we may perhaps succeed in learning an important lesson from these teachings, or at least in appreciating the greatness of the *Bardo Thödol*, which vouchsafes to the dead man the ultimate and highest truth, that even the gods are the radiance and reflection of our own souls. No sun is thereby eclipsed for the Oriental as it would be for the Christian, who would feel robbed of his God; on the contrary, his soul is the light of the Godhead, and the Godhead is the soul. The East can sustain this paradox better than the unfortunate Angelus Silesius, who even today would be psychologically far in advance of his time.

It is highly sensible of the *Bardo Thödol* to make clear to the dead man the primacy of the soul, for that is the one thing which

life does not make clear to us. We are so hemmed in by things which jostle and oppress that we never get a chance, in the midst of all these 'given' things, to wonder by whom they are 'given'. It is from this world of 'given' things that the dead man liberates himself; and the purpose of the instruction is to help him towards this liberation. We, if we put ourselves in his place, shall derive no lesser reward from it, since we learn from the very first paragraphs that the 'giver' of all 'given' things dwells within us. This is a truth which in the face of all evidence, in the greatest things as in the smallest, is never known, although it is often so very necessary, indeed vital, for us to know it. Such knowledge, to be sure, is suitable only for contemplatives who are minded to understand the purpose of existence, for those who are Gnostics by temperament and therefore believe in a saviour who, like the saviour of the Mandaeans, calls himself 'gnosis of life' (*manda d'hajie*). Perhaps it is not granted to many of us to see the world as something 'given'. A great reversal of standpoint, calling for much sacrifice, is needed before we can see the world as 'given' by the very nature of the soul. It is so much more straight-forward, more dramatic, impressive, and therefore more convincing, to see that all the things happen to me than to observe how I make them happen. Indeed, the animal nature of man makes him resist seeing himself as the maker of his circumstances. That is why attempts of this kind were always the object of secret initiations, culminating as a rule in a figurative death which symbolized the total character of this reversal. And, in point of fact, the instruction given in the *Bardo Thödol* serves to recall to the dead man the experiences of his initiation and the teachings of his *guru*, for the instruction is, at bottom, nothing less than an initiation of the dead into the *Bardo* life, just as the initiation of the living was a preparation for the Beyond. Such was the case, at least, with all the mystery cults in ancient civilizations from the time of the Egyptian and Eleusinian mysteries. In the initiation of the living, however, this 'Beyond' is not a world beyond death, but a reversal of the mind's intentions and outlook, a psychological 'Beyond' or, in Christian terms, a 'redemption' from the trammels of the world and of sin. Redemption is a separation and deliverance from an earlier condition of darkness and unconsciousness, and leads to a condition

of illumination and releasedness, to victory and transcendence over everything 'given'.

Thus far the *Bardo Thödol* is, as Dr. Evans-Wentz also feels, an initiation process whose purpose it is to restore to the soul the divinity it lost at birth. Now it is a charactertistic of Oriental religious literature that the teaching invariably begins with the most important item, with the ultimate and highest principles which, with us, would come last—as for instance in Apuleius, where Lucius is worshipped as Helios only right at the end. Accordingly, in the *Bardo Thödol*, the initiation is a series of diminishing climaxes ending with rebirth in the womb. The only 'initiation process' that is still alive and practised today in the West is the analysis of the unconscious as used by doctors for therapeutic purposes. This penetration into the ground-layers of consciousness is a kind of rational maieutics in the Socratic sense, a bringing forth of psychic contents that are still germinal, subliminal, and as yet unborn. Originally, this therapy took the form of Freudian psychoanalysis and was mainly concerned with sexual fantasies. This is the realm that corresponds to the last and lowest region of the *Bardo*, known as the *Sidpa Bardo*, where the dead man, unable to profit by the teachings of the *Chikhai* and *Chönyid Bardo*, begins to fall a prey to sexual fantasies and is attracted by the vision of mating couples. Eventually he is caught by a womb and born into the earthly world again. Meanwhile, as one might expect, the Oedipus complex starts functioning. If his *karma* destines him to be reborn as a man, he will fall in love with his mother-to-be and will find his father hateful and digusting. Conversely, the future daughter will be highly attracted by her father-to-be and repelled by her mother. The European passes through this specifically Freudian domain when his unconscious contents are brought to light under analysis, but he goes in the reverse direction. He journeys back through the world of infantile-sexual fantasy to the womb. It has even been suggested in psychoanalytical circles that the trauma par excellence is the birth-experience itself—nay more, psychoanalysts even claim to have probed back tc memories of intrauterine origin. Here Western reason reaches its limit, unfortunately. I say 'unfortunately', because one rather wishes that Freudian psychoanalysis could have happily pursued these so-

called intra-uterine experiences still further back; had it succeeded in this bold undertaking, it would surely have come out beyond the *Sidpa Bardo* and penetrated from behind into the lower reaches of the *Chönyid Bardo*. It is true that with the equipment of our existing biological ideas such a venture would not have been crowned with success; it would have needed a wholly different kind of philosophical preparation from that based on current scientific assumptions. But, had the journey back been consistently pursued, it would undoubtedly have led to the postulate of a pre-uterine existence, a true *Bardo* life, if only it had been possible to find at least some trace of an experiencing subject. As it was, the psychoanalysts never got beyond purely conjectural traces of intra-uterine experiences, and even the famous 'birth trauma' has remained such an obvious truism that it can no longer explain anything, any more than can the hypothesis that life is a disease with a bad prognosis because its outcome is always fatal.

Freudian psychoanalysis, in all essential aspects, never went beyond the experiences of the *Sidpa Bardo;* that is, it was unable to extricate itself from sexual fantasies and similar 'incompatible' tendencies which cause anxiety and other affective states. Nevertheless, Freud's theory is the first attempt made by the West to investigate, as if from below, from the animal sphere of instinct, the psychic territory that corresponds in Tantric Lāmaism to the *Sidpa Bardo*. A very justifiable fear of metaphysics prevented Freud from penetrating into the sphere of the 'occult'. In addition to this, the *Sidpa* state, if we are to accept the psychology of the *Sidpa Bardo*, is characterized by the fierce wind of *karma*, which whirls the dead man along until he comes to the 'womb-door'. In other words, the *Sidpa* state permits of no going back, because it is sealed off against the *Chönyid* state by an intense striving downwards, towards the animal sphere of instinct and physical rebirth. That is to say, anyone who penetrates into the unconscious with purely biological assumptions will become stuck in the instinctual sphere and be unable to advance beyond it, for he will be pulled back again and again into physical existence. It is therefore not possible for Freudian theory to reach anything except an essentially negative valuation of the unconscious. It is a 'nothing but'. At the same time, it must be admitted that this view of the psyche is typically Western, only it is expressed more blatantly, more plainly, and more ruthlessly than others would have dared to express it, though at bottom they think no differently. As to what 'mind' means in this connection, we can only cherish the hope that it will carry conviction. But, as even Max Scheler noted with regret, the power of this 'mind' is, to say the least of it, doubtful.

I think, then, we can state it as a fact that with the aid of psychoanalysis the rationalizing mind of the West has pushed forward into what one might call the neuroticism of the *Sidpa* state, and has there been brought to an inevitable standstill by the uncritical assumption that everything psychological is subjective and personal. Even so, this advance has been a great gain, inasmuch as it has enabled us to take one more step behind our conscious lives. This knowledge also gives us a hint of how we ought to read the *Bardo Thödol*—that is, backwards. If, with the help of our Western science, we have to some extent succeeded in understanding the psychological character of the *Sidpa Bardo*, our next task is to see if we can make anything of the preceding *Chönyid Bardo*.

The *Chönyid* state is one of *karmic* illusion—that is to say, illusions which result from the psychic residua of previous existences. According to the Eastern view, *karma* implies a sort of psychic theory of heredity based on the hypothesis of reincarnation, which in the last resort is an hypothesis of the supratemporality of the soul. Neither our scientific knowledge nor our reason can keep in step with this idea. There are too many if's and but's. Above all, we know desperately little about the possibilities of continued existence of the individual soul after death, so little that we cannot even conceive how anyone could prove anything at all in this respect. Moreover, we know only too well, on epistemological grounds, that such a proof would be just as impossible as the proof of God. Hence we may cautiously accept the idea of *karma* only if we understand it as *psychic heredity* in the very widest sense of the word. Psychic heredity does exist—that is to say, there is inheritance of psychic characteristics such as predisposition to disease, traits of character, special gifts, and so forth. It does no violence to the psychic

nature of these complex facts if natural science reduces them to what appear to be physical aspects (nuclear structures in cells, and so on). They are essential phenomena of life which express themselves, in the main, psychically, just as there are other inherited characteristics which express themselves, in the main, physiologically, on the physical level. Among these inherited psychic factors there is a special class which is not confined either to family or to race. These are the universal dispositions of the mind, and they are to be understood as analogous to Plato's forms (*eidola*), in accordance with which the mind organizes its contents. One could also describe these forms as *categories* analogous to the logical categories which are always and everywhere present as the basic postulates of reason. Only, in the case of our 'forms', we are not dealing with categories of reason but with categories of the *imagination*. As the products of imagination are always in essence visual, their forms must, from the outset, have the character of images and moreover of *typical* images, which is why, following St. Augustine, I call them 'archetypes'. Comparative religion and mythology are rich mines of archetypes, and so is the psychology of dreams and psychoses. The astonishing parallelism between these images and the ideas they serve to express has frequently given rise to the wildest migration theories, although it would have been far more natural to think of the remarkable similarity of the human psyche at all times and in all places. Archetypal fantasy-forms are, in fact, reproduced spontaneously anytime and anywhere, without there being any conceivable trace of direct transmission. The original structural components of the psyche are of no less surprising a uniformity than are those of the visible body. The archetypes are, so to speak, organs of the pre-rational psyche. They are eternally inherited forms and ideas which have at first no specific content. Their specific content only appears in the course of the individual's life, when personal experience is taken up in precisely these forms. If the archetypes were not pre-existent in identical form everywhere, how could one explain the fact, postulated at almost every turn by the *Bardo Thödol*, that the dead do not know that they are dead, and that this assertion is to be met with just as often in the dreary, half-baked literature of European and American Spiritualism? Although we find the same

assertion in Swedenborg, knowledge of his writings can hardly be sufficiently widespread for this little bit of information to have been picked up by every small-town 'medium'. And a connection between Swendenborg and the *Bardo Thödol* is completely unthinkable. It is a primordial, universal idea that the dead simply continue their earthly existence and do not know that they are disembodied spirits—an archetypal idea which enters into immediate, visible manifestation whenever anyone sees a ghost. It is significant, too, that ghosts all over the world have certain features in common. I am naturally aware of the unverifiable spiritualistic hypothesis, though I have no wish to make it my own. I must content myself with the hypothesis of an omnipresent, but differentiated, psychic structure which is inherited and which necessarily gives a certain form and direction to all experience. For, just as the organs of the body are not mere lumps of indifferent, passive matter, but are dynamic, functional complexes which assert themselves with imperious urgency, so also the archetypes, as organs of the psyche, are dynamic, instinctual complexes which determine psychic life to an extraordinary degree. That is why I also call them *dominants* of the unconscious. The layer of unconscious psyche which is made up of these universal dynamic forms I have termed the *collective unconscious*.

So far as I know, there is no inheritance of individual prenatal, or pre-uterine, memories, but there are undoubtedly inherited archetypes which are, however, devoid of content, because, to begin with, they contain no personal experiences. They only emerge into consciousness when personal experiences have rendered them visible. As we have seen, *Sidpa* psychology consists in wanting to live and to be born. (The *Sidpa Bardo* is the '*Bardo* of Seeking Rebirth'.) Such a state, therefore, precludes any experience of transubjective psychic realities, unless the individual refuses categorically to be born back again into the world of consciousness. According to the teachings of the *Bardo Thödol*, it is still possible for him, in each of the *Bardo* states, to reach the *Dharma-Kāya* by transcending the four-faced Mount Meru, provided that he does not yield to his desire to follow the 'dim lights'. This is as much as to say that the dead man must desperately resist the dictates of reason, as we understand it,

and give up the supremacy of egohood, regarded by reason as sacrosanct. What this means in practice is complete capitulation to the objective powers of the psyche, with all that this entails; a kind of symbolical death, corresponding to the Judgement of the Dead in the *Sidpa Bardo*. It means the end of all conscious, rational, morally responsible conduct of life, and a voluntary surrender to what the *Bardo Thödol* calls '*karmic* illusion'. *Karmic* illusion springs from belief in a visionary world of an extremely irrational nature, which neither accords with nor derives from our rational judgements but is the exclusive product of uninhibited imagination. It is sheer dream or 'fantasy', and every well-meaning person will instantly caution us against it; nor indeed can one see at first sight what is the difference between fantasies of this kind and the phantasmagoria of a lunatic. Very often only a slight *abaissement du niveau mental* is needed to unleash this world of illusion. The terror and darkness of this moment has its equivalent in the experiences described in the opening sections of the *Sidpa Bardo*. But the contents of this *Bardo* also reveal the archetypes, the *karmic* images which appear first in their terrifying form. The *Chönyid* state is equivalent to a deliberately induced psychosis.

One often hears and reads about the dangers of *yoga*, particularly of the ill-reputed *Kuṇḍalinī yoga*. The deliberately induced psychotic state, which in certain unstable individuals might easily lead to a real psychosis, is a danger that needs to be taken very seriously indeed. These things really are dangerous and ought not to be meddled with in our typically Western way. It is a meddling with fate, which strikes at the very roots of human existence and can let loose a flood of sufferings of which no sane person ever dreamed. These sufferings correspond to the hellish torments of the *Chönyid* state, described in the text as follows:—

> 'Then the Lord of Death will place round thy neck a rope and drag thee along; he will cut off thy head, tear out thy heart, pull out thy intestines, lick up thy brain, drink thy blood, eat thy flesh, and gnaw thy bones; but thou wilt be incapable of dying. Even when thy body is hacked to pieces, it will revive again. The repeated hacking will cause intense pain and torture.'

These tortures aptly describe the real nature of the danger: it is a disintegration of the wholeness of the *Bardo* body, which is a kind of 'subtle body' constituting the visible envelope of the psychic self in the after-death state. The psychological equivalent of this dismemberment is psychic dissociation. In its deleterious form it would be schizophrenia (split mind). This most common of all mental illnesses consists essentially in a marked *abaissement du niveau mental* which abolishes the normal checks imposed by the conscious mind and thus gives unlimited scope to the play of the unconscious 'dominants'.

The transition, then, from the *Sidpa* state to the *Chönyid* state is a dangerous reversal of the aims and intentions of the conscious mind. It is a sacrifice of the ego's stability and a surrender to the extreme uncertainty of what must seem like a chaotic riot of phantasmal forms. When Freud coined the phrase that the ego was 'the true seat of anxiety', he was giving voice to a very true and profound intuition. Fear of self-sacrifice lurks deep in every ego, and this fear is often only the precariously controlled demand of the unconscious forces to burst out in full strength. No one who strives for selfhood (individuation) is spared this dangerous passage, for that which is feared also belongs to the wholeness of the self—the sub-human, or supra-human, world of psychic 'dominants' from which the ego originally emancipated itself with enormous effort, and then only partially, for the sake of a more or less illusory freedom. This liberation is certainly a very necessary and very heroic undertaking, but it represents nothing final: it is merely the creation of a *subject*, who, in order to find fulfilment, has still to be confronted by an *object*. This, at first sight, would appear to be the world, which is swelled out with projections for that very purpose. Here we seek and find our difficulties, here we seek and find our enemy, here we seek and find what is dear and precious to us; and it is comforting to know that all evil and all good is to be found out there, in the visible object, where it can be conquered, punished, destroyed or enjoyed. But nature herself does not allow this paradisal state of innocence to continue for ever. There are, and always have been, those who cannot help but see that the world and its experiences are in the nature of a symbol, and that it really reflects something that lies hidden in the subject himself, in his own transubjective

reality. It is from this profound intuition, according to *lāmaist* doctrine, that the *Chönyid* state derives its true meaning, which is why the *Chönyid Bardo* is entitled 'The *Bardo* of the Experiencing of Reality'.

The reality experienced in the *Chönyid* state is, as the last section of the corresponding *Bardo* teaches, the reality of thought. The 'thought-forms' appear as realities, fantasy takes on real form, and the terrifying dream evoked by *karma* and played out by the unconscious 'dominants' begins. The first to appear (if we read the text backwards) is the all-destroying God of Death, the epitome of all terrors; he is followed by the 28 'power-holding' and sinister goddesses and the 58 'blood-drinking' goddesses. In spite of their daemonic aspect, which appears as a confusing chaos of terrifying attributes and monstrosities, a certain order is already discernible. We find that there are companies of gods and goddesses who are arranged according to the four directions and are distinguished by typical mystic colours. It gradually becomes clearer that all these deities are organized into *maṇḍalas*, or circles, containing a cross of the four colours. The colours are co-ordinated with the four aspects of wisdom:

(1) White=the light-path of the mirror-like wisdom;
(2) Yellow=the light-path of the wisdom of equality;
(3) Red=the light-path of the discriminative wisdom;
(4) Green=the light-path of the all-performing wisdom.

On a higher level of insight, the dead man knows that the real thought-forms all emanate from himself, and that the four light-paths of wisdom which appear before him are the radiations of his own psychic faculties. This takes us straight to the psychology of the *lāmaistic maṇḍala*, which I have already discussed in the book I brought out with the late Richard Wilhelm, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

Continuing our ascent backwards through the region of the *Chönyid Bardo*, we come finally to the vision of the Four Great Ones: the green Amogha-Siddhi, the red Amitābha, the yellow Ratna-Sambhava, and the white Vajra-Sattva. The ascent ends with the effulgent blue light of the *Dharma-Dhātu*, the Buddha-body, which glows in the midst of the *maṇḍala* from the heart of Vairochana.

With this final vision the *karmic* illusions cease; consciousness,

weaned away from all form and from all attachment to objects, returns to the timeless, inchoate state of the *Dharma-Kāya*. Thus (reading backwards) the *Chikhai* state, which appeared at the moment if death, is reached.

I think these few hints will suffice to give the attentive reader some idea of the psychology of the *Bardo Thödol*. The book describes a way of initiation in reverse, which, unlike the eschatological expectations of Christianity, prepares the soul for a descent into physical being. The thoroughly intellectualistic and rationalistic worldly-mindedness of the European makes it advisable for us to reverse the sequence of the *Bardo Thödol* and to regard it as an account of Eastern initiation experiences, though one is perfectly free, if one chooses, to substitute Christian symbols for the gods of the *Chönyid Bardo*. At any rate, the sequence of events as I have described it offers a close parallel to the phenomenology of the European unconscious when it is undergoing an 'initiation process', that is to say, when it is being analyzed. The transformation of the unconscious that occurs under analysis makes it the natural analogue of the religious initiation ceremonies, which do, however, differ in principle from the natural process in that they forestall the natural course of development and substitute for the spontaneous production of symbols a deliberately selected set of symbols prescribed by tradition. We can see this in the *Exercitia* of Ignatius Loyola, or in the *yoga* meditations of the Buddhists and Tantrists.

The reversal of the order of the chapters, which I have suggested here as an aid to understanding, in no way accords with the original intention of the *Bardo Thödol*. Nor is the psychological use we make of it anything but a secondary intention, though one that is possibly sanctioned by *lāmaist* custom. The real purpose of this singular book is the attempt, which must seem very strange to the educated European of the twentieth century, to enlighten the dead on their journey through the regions of the *Bardo*. The Catholic Church is the only place in the world of the white man where any provision is made for the souls of the departed. Inside the Protestant camp, with its world-affirming optimism, we only find a few mediumistic 'rescue circles', whose main concern is to make the dead aware of the fact that they *are* dead. But, generally speaking, we

have nothing in the West that is in any way comparable to the *Bardo Thödol*, except for certain secret writings which are inaccessible to the wider public and to the ordinary scientist. According to tradition, the *Bardo Thödol*, too, seems to have been included among the ' hidden ' books, as Dr. Evans-Wentz makes clear in his Introduction. As such, it forms a special chapter in the magical ' cure of the soul ' which extends even beyond death. This cult of the dead is rationally based on the belief in the supratemporality of the soul, but its irrational basis is to be found in the psychological need of the living to do something for the departed. This is an elementary need which forces itself upon even the most ' enlightened ' individuals when faced by the death of relatives and friends. That is why, enlightenment or no enlightenment, we still have all manner of ceremonies for the dead. If Lenin had to submit to being embalmed and put on show in a sumptuous mausoleum like an Egyptian pharaoh, we may be quite sure it was not because his followers believed in the resurrection of the body. Apart, however, from the Masses said for the soul in the Catholic Church, the provisions we make for the dead are rudimentary and on the lowest level, not because we cannot convince ourselves of the soul's immortality, but because we have rationalized the above-mentioned psychological need out of existence. We behave as if we did not have this need, and because we cannot believe in a life after death we prefer to do nothing about it. Simpler-minded people follow their own feelings, and, as in Italy, build themselves funeral monuments of gruesome beauty. The Catholic Masses for the soul are on a level considerably above this, because they are expressly intended for the psychic welfare of the deceased and are not a mere gratification of lachrymose sentiments. But the highest application of spiritual effort on behalf of the departed is surely to be found in the instructions of the *Bardo Thödol*. They are so detailed and thoroughly adapted to the apparent changes in the dead man's condition that every serious-minded reader must ask himself whether these wise old *lāmas* might not, after all, have caught a glimpse of the fourth dimension and twitched the veil from the greatest of life's secrets.

If the truth is always doomed to be a disappointment, one almost feels tempted to concede at least that much reality to the

vision of life in the *Bardo*. At any rate, it is unexpectedly original, if nothing else, to find the after-death state, of which our religious imagination has formed the most grandiose conceptions, painted in lurid colours as a terrifying dream-state of a progressively degenerative character. The supreme vision comes not at the end of the *Bardo*, but right at the beginning, in the moment of death; what happens afterward is an ever-deepening descent into illusion and obscuration, down to the ultimate degradation of new physical birth. The spiritual climax is reached at the moment when life ends. Human life, therefore, is the vehicle of the highest perfection it is possible to attain; it alone generates the *karma* that makes it possible for the dead man to abide in the perpetual light of the Voidness without clinging to any object, and thus to rest on the hub of the wheel of rebirth, freed from all illusion of genesis and decay. Life in the *Bardo* brings no eternal rewards or punishments, but merely a descent into a new life which shall bear the individual nearer to his final goal. But this eschatological goal is what he himself brings to birth as the last and highest fruit of the labours and aspirations of earthly existence. This view is not only lofty, it is manly and heroic.

The degenerative character of *Bardo* life is corroborated by the spiritualistic literature of the West, which again and again gives one a sickening impression of the utter inanity and banality of communications from the ' spirit world '. The scientific mind does not hesitate to explain these reports as emanations from the unconscious of the ' mediums ' and of those taking part in the séance, and even to extend this explanation to the description of the Hereafter given in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. And it is an undeniable fact that the whole book is created out of the archetypal contents of the unconscious. Behind these there lie—and in this our Western reason is quite right—no physical or metaphysical realities, but ' merely ' the reality of psychic facts, the data of psychic experience. Now whether a thing is ' given ' subjectively or objectively, the fact remains that it *is*. The *Bardo Thödol* says no more than this, for its five Dhyāni Buddhas are themselves no more than psychic data. That is just what the dead man has to recognize, if it has not already become clear to him during life that his own psychic self and the giver of all data are one and the same. The world of gods and spirits is truly

'nothing but' the collective unconscious inside me. To turn this sentence round so that it reads: The collective unconscious is the world of gods and spirits outside me, no intellectual acrobatics are needed, but a whole human lifetime, perhaps even many lifetimes of increasing *completeness*. Notice that I do not say 'of increasing perfection', because those who are 'perfect' make another kind of discovery altogether.

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The *Bardo Thödol* began by being a 'closed' book, and so it has remained, no matter what kind of commentaries may be written upon it. For it is a book that will only open itself to spiritual understanding, and this is a capacity which no man is born with, but which he can only acquire through special training and special experience. It is good that such to all intents and purposes 'useless' books exist. They are meant for those 'queer folk' who no longer set much store by the uses, aims, and meaning of present-day 'civilisation'.