

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LIFE-AFTER-DEATH PHENOMENON[†]

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Foreword

The challenge accepted for this paper is to compare philosophies and religions in terms *other than* their own. Catholic theologian Karl Rahner points out that in order to do this, first the specific limits to a word's meaning call for us to define our use of terms:

[Any author] must say what is and what is not meant HERE by [a word],...[and] distinguish it from its changing profane meaning, and thus on account of these changes in meaning, his situation and task is forever a new one.¹

Within this flux of meanings, Rahner next deems it "necessary to use other words for official ecclesiastical concepts to be explained." Any explanation would thus

...take concrete shape and be summarized in some other...explanatory concept without repudiating the concept that it explains.²

A challenge indeed! It leads to the question: should one's personal belief be openly stated, or should it emerge from a more subtle argumentation? Is not the real challenge to let readers come to the author's viewpoint based on their own evaluation of the material rather than from any

[†]This article was written for a graduate course, "Jung and the East," at Temple University, examining several Taoist and Buddhist writings together with Carl Jung's commentaries. Since Swedenborg was mentioned by the instructor, and also in both books selected for the paper—the *Bardo Thödol* ("Tibetan Book of the Dead"), and Raymond Moody's *Life After Life*—my assignment could, for the sake of comparison, include both him and New Church doctrines, but without dominating the discussion with Swedenborgian concepts.

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¹Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p.57.

²*Ibid.*, p. 109

overt missionary statement? Can we restate a personal creed in our own words, different from the original wording, and still reach a target audience without “repudiating” the original concept? In the present case, can we let New Church theology and philosophy “take concrete shape in some other explanatory concept” than its own—also “without repudiating it”?

Perhaps that lesson has to be learned in order to achieve the call for the New Church “...to believe the Word of the Lord, and confirm...[it] by natural truths, in terms familiar to the learned world” (AC 129). Other terms than those used in revelation, are clearly called for! This article may be seen as an effort to practice this kind of thought.

An Analysis of The Life-After-Death Phenomenon

Introduction

The concept of a life after death persists through history, across peoples and cultures. The typical Christian approach will in this analysis serve only as a backdrop; more thorough will be the study of the *Bardo Thödol*, which describes life after death³ and R.A. Moody’s book, *Life after Life* (1975) which examines the claims of a “near death experience” (NDE).⁴ Moody in his turn compares the evidence of the NDE with the Bible, Plato, the Bardo Thödol, and Swedenborg.

Since Carl Jung also made a commentary on the Bardo Thödol, and refers *inter alia* to the Bible, Plato and Swedenborg, I will begin with Jung’s ideas, then move to the Bardo, and finally to the Moody book and his comparisons. In examining these fertile interconnections, my purpose is to answer the question: is the life-after-death phenomenon just a projection of the mind, or is it evidence of an actual post-death existence?

This “either-or” proposition, however, will have a third alternative: life after death could be a reality, but so far beyond scientific proof that all we will ever know of it are versions of it which already exist. Just as the

³The “Tibetan Book of the Dead” consists of three Bardos, or stages of life after death. The final goal of the Bardo experience is Dharma Kaya or perfect Buddhahood.

⁴From 150 cases of “near death experiences” (NDE), a “pattern” has emerged, which coincides consistently in a significant number of details from person to person.

unconscious, even by thorough analysis, can never be fully known, neither can the life after death!

So whether they be projections of the mind or spiritual reality, all versions of "life after death" may be just partial phenomena of the *de facto* noumenon, which is fully known only once in each life-time by actually dying!⁵

Is There Life After Death?

a) Carl Gustav Jung

Jung puts the projection versus reality alternatives in terms of a patient who dreamed of a dead friend standing by his bed. Jung asks, "Was the friend a fantasy, or was it really that friend who stood there?"⁶

His answer in general is, that a "...belief in reincarnation proves only the phenomenon of the belief, not the content of the belief."⁷ Thus, reincarnation only qualifies as a phenomenon, not a noumenon. Yet, for the sake of the experiential side of his investigation, Jung "credits the fantasy with reality."⁸

The same question of projection versus reality could be asked of all beliefs in life after death in general: ancestors seen in visions and dreams are only a proof of the phenomenon of belief not of contents. Seeing ancestors or family members is not a proof of the reality of life after death, only of the belief in it. So, the answer to the question "What happens when I die?" will thus depend on *who* is talking. Any answer cannot be verified to the point where everyone agrees and says, "Yes, that is how it is. Now we know."⁹

⁵We are thus addressing the question to which Chesterton alluded in his famous last words, "And now for the great mystery."

⁶C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1966), p. 312.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁹However, one must also ask: "What if someone HAD gone there, and come back and told us, would we believe it?" Thousands of people over the last two centuries have come to believe that one such traveller has in fact removed that last barrier. Now we *can* know. That man was Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) whose open contact with the after-life lasted for 30 years. His 30 volumes of systematic rational theology continue to influence numerous people, both *literati* and regular folk. E.g. Johnny Appleseed and Helen Keller, Emerson and Goethe. Jung himself read "seven volumes of Swedenborg." (*Memories* p. 99)

But prior to death, Jung says, "there is no proof of continuity of the soul after death"¹⁰, and that nothing "in us is preserved for eternity".¹¹ He nonetheless admits that the unconscious part of the human psyche provides enough raw material for an "intermediary world of mythic imagination."¹²

This world Jung has explored by means of the interpretation of dreams and visions. As is well known, Jung developed a psychology which more than others has 'unmasked', so to speak, our inner, unconscious mental processes. If dreams and visions are part of the same unconscious psyche as the after-death phenomena in the Bardo Thödol, as well as in Moody's subjects, then all of these phenomena could be part of the same psychical fabric which engenders them.

Jung claims there is a link. Both "dreams" and waking "visions" involve images which portray the subject's own inner fears, hopes or longings. The images seem to have a meaning to which other people's dreams and visions relate in a consistent manner. The meaning seems permanent.

The same images occur also in the Bardo and in other descriptions of the after-death phenomenon and there is enough agreement of images to warrant Jung's postulate that they are "archetypes."¹³

Jung found the same image-consistency in dream analysis. However, the imagery depended on the living not the dead person. People dreamt of relatives *who came to them seeking information!* "Spirits," he states, "depend on those still live for answers to questions."¹⁴ Also in Jung's own dreams he "had to instruct the figures of the unconscious, or spirits of the departed."¹⁵ Similarly, he found that spirits from earlier periods in history "felt humiliated" because they could not answer his questions! They could not receive his instruction. He concludes that consciousness after death

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 316.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 322.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Archetypes are actually Platonic concepts, taken over by Jung, to describe an ancient accumulative racial memory. Everyone has more or less the same archetypes, stored in the "Collective Unconscious." They are projected as dreams and visions.

¹⁴ Jung, *Memories*, p. 311.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 307.

depends on the “level of consciousness attained by humanity;”¹⁶ once you have passed “over,” in other words, you are stuck with your limitations. Only on earth are you free to grow.

However, because different parts of humanity grow to different levels of consciousness ranging from primitive to cosmopolitan, any level Jung postulates must thus have an “upper variable limit.”¹⁷ Such a limit depends on how strong anyone’s conscious desire is to grasp the reality of psychic existence here on earth. After death “the spirit” continues to desire this. “What the human being brings over at the time of death,”¹⁸ Jung concludes, determines whether someone had failed to reach that “limit” or potential “during his lifetime,” or not. If not, they will “demand to attain it after death.”¹⁹

From all this we see a kind of a co-dependency between the departed “spirit” and those known to him left here on earth. We find a similar situation in the Bardo, where the Guru sitting by the dead person for 49 days, is the “contact” with that dead one. Swedenborg also reports that “the spiritual world [inhabited by the departed] rests on mankind as a house rests on its foundation.”²⁰ Subjects in Moody’s book also report that they “saw their body” and observed themselves from the height of the ceiling. All subjects eventually returned into their bodies.²¹

Does this show that the “departed” consult with “the living,” and that the living provide the basis for continued existence of the “dead”? And even if it does, such a co-dependency could favor either projection, or the reality of a post-death existence.

The evidence says that at the very least, there are here several independent sources of evidence that a *phenomenon of a bridge* across the chasm imposed by death *does exist*. Whether such a bridge really exists depends on the reality of the after-life! The Bardo Thödol (“The Tibetan Book of the dead”) is a classic example of that bridge to the unconscious at work, a bridge to the meanings of the archetypes.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 311.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 309.

²⁰ Swedenborg, *The Last Judgment* n. 9.

²¹ cf. Moody, *Life After Life* p. 36.

b) Eastern Thought and the Bardo Thödol

Is there “hard evidence” for the *meaning* of the archetypes of the unconscious? Jung moans that the West just “projects the meaning, but in the east, man himself embodies meaning.”²² Imagine Jung’s delight at discovering that the meanings of archetypes, which he had laboriously culled from western minds, were already radiantly illustrated in ancient eastern tales of after-life! Prior to this, Jung states, “I knew of no realm of human experience with which I might have backed up my findings with some degree of assurance.”²³ However, the Taoist book, the “Secret of the Golden Flower,” Jung says “contained exactly those pieces which I had sought for in vain among the Gnostics.”^{24,25} “I had been unconsciously led along that secret way which has been the preoccupation of the best minds of the East for centuries.”²⁶

However, in the *Bardo* Jung was faced with even more details on reincarnation than he had ever dreamt of! The Bardo’s exact stages—Chikhai, Chönyid and Sidpa Bardo—are spelled out in 49 days spanning a path from the death-symptoms, to either Dharma Kaya, which is perfect Buddhahood, or to reincarnation—another turn. This latter, perhaps surprisingly, is a fate to be avoided at all cost since it involves a return into the world of “maya” or “sangsara,” meaning conditioned existence. That’s a failure. Karma, or the fateful influence of earlier lives, has then won.

Since Jung already believes that “there is no proof of the continuity of the soul after death” (cf. above), but credits reality to it, he goes on to argue both sides of the issue.

²² Jung, *Memories* p. 316.

²³ Jung, Foreword to 2nd German Edition of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, a Taoist text trans. Richard Wilhelm (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962), p. xiii.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

²⁵ Jung’s point here, is that the Western traditions had departed from our unconscious psyche to the point that only few traces of it remained, namely astrology, alchemy, and gnosticism. Until 1927, Jung contented himself with these Western relics of the unconscious. Now he found a treasure-trove! His commentaries on “The Golden Flower,” “I Ching,” and the “Bardo Thödol” are rich in parallels between his own psychology, and Eastern thought: one such parallel is between his “collective unconscious” and the “karma” of the east.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

First he asks, "Is man's karma personal? If so, personal continuity exists." Secondly, "If not, then the karma is incarnated again without any personal continuity."²⁷

By "personal karma" Jung means that the "collective unconscious" of any individual is attached to him so that when excessive karma gravitates back to *sangsara*, he is dragged along with it, and is reincarnated as a continuity of the previous person. He would remember past lives. However, if the "karma is impersonal," then in effect the collective unconscious—very similar in each person in any case—is incarnated, but the personal continuity is broken. In that case, "you" are just a memory among those left behind, which merges with their collective unconscious.

What determines whether the karma is personal or impersonal, or drags "you" back, or leaves "you" behind? The "variable limit" which a person takes with him presumably determines this. That would make "reincarnation" somewhat up to the individual. Since Jung accepts any after-death phenomenon only as a "mythologizing function, inter-mediate between the unconscious and the conscious knowledge of eternity, but without reference to the here and now,"²⁸ he deals with it just as a phenomenon, and leaves its possible noumenal reality as beyond proof. So Jung still chooses to ignore a possible conscious state after death.

But on that "intermediate level," I believe Jung is testing the hypothesis *on his own terms*. He asks, "Have I lived before in the past?" If so, then karma may one day "drag him back," and after many centuries "someone is needed to tackle a problem, and in response to that need, 'I' would be reborn."²⁹

He casts this question into the terms of one of his own dreams, in which he sees a Yogi with his own face. The Yogi dreams about "Jung"! If the Yogi awakens, then "Jung" would disappear!³⁰

From this Jung concludes that the life here and now is just a projection or "dream" of our real unconscious "self"! Thus there *is a transcendental world*—the world of the *Bardo*! Jung says, that *it* is the real world, and this

²⁷ Jung, *Memories*, p. 317.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

world is an illusion, called “Maya” by the Buddhists. The unconscious likewise is the real self, and the conscious ego is an illusion, like a dream.

Here, Jung comes up with an opposite conclusion, favoring reality, and not the projection interpretation.

In the vein of “reality,” Jung muses that “our purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being. We should increase in our consciousness that which affects the unconscious,” to balance its influence.³¹

In short, Jung thinks that the “soul” is the real self and projects the “I” that exists in this 3-dimensional world. The Bardo state is the experience of the “self” after the “I” has died! The “I” lives in this conditioned world where all things are “given”—Sangsara,—and from which we are to be liberated by death. But these “given” things exist only from the “giver” of all things, *within each person*.³² Reality hides within each person.

The entire Bardo or after-death experience is consequently a phenomenon of our own mind! The “dazzling deities” seen in the Bardo are the aspects of the dead one’s own “inner processes.” “Fear them not. Know them to be the thought-forms of thine own intellectual faculties.”³³

Jung realized here that a “reversal” takes place when you face your own inner self. The Yogi with your face actually dreams you! The inner self projects our conscious existence or ego. When the ego (or “I”) “dies,” we emerge on the dimension of reality. This Jung calls the “reversal of aims” and it is very dangerous, similar to a “deliberately induced psychosis.”³⁴

This reversal is precisely the “face to face” that the Bardo experience brings about—with such frightful manifestations of your unconscious that the “phenomenon” of after-life archetypes is likely to rob you of your sanity if you are not careful. To westerners, Jung levels the warning “don’t try it!”³⁵

³¹ Ibid., p. 326.

³² Jung, commentary on “Tibetan Book of the Dead” n. 840 in *Psychology and the East* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978).

³³ *Bardo Thödol*, cf. pp. 125, 129, 143.

³⁴ Jung, *Psychology and the East*, n. 847.

³⁵ “I would expressly point out that I am not recommending the above technique [dialectics with inner self].” C.G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), n. 324.

But in the east, they tried it, and describe the three Bardo states: Chikhai, Chönyid and Sidpa which divide 49 days between death and rebirth. All this time, a guru sits by the dead and reads him through his passage. However, because of this “reversal of aims,” Jung feels the three Bardos should be read in reverse: “The Bardo Thödol is a series of diminishing climaxes, ending with rebirth in the womb.”³⁶ He feels they would reach a crescendo if read in reverse.

He justifies reading it in reverse by arguing that there is that “dangerous reversal of aims and intentions of the conscious mind,” in which the “ego is sacrificed and surrendered to phantasmal forms.”³⁷ Thus Jung feels the Sidpa should happen first, which is the Judgment scene. Then the Chönyid Bardo, or the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, and finally the Chikhai Bardo, or peaceful awareness of the Inner Light of Dharma Kaya.³⁸ However, we deal with it here in published sequence.

c) Recognizing the Inner Light

In summary form, the Bardo Thödol deals first with the symptoms of death in the Chikhai Bardo;³⁹ then the Peaceful Deities for 7 days in the Chönyid Bardo, followed by another 7 days of the same deities but now changed into Wrathful ones. A deity holds a “mirror” which reveals the dead one’s entire life. The Lord of Death appears, ordering “Strike! Slay!” “Executive Furies” then drag you by the neck, “cut off your head, extract your heart, pull out your intestines, lick up your brain, drink your blood,” etc. There is “intense pain and torture.” Yet all these things are “your own hallucinations”! The body is “voidness”.⁴⁰

Next comes Sidpa Bardo, when the womb-doors appear for re-incarnation. One can however, still be brought “face to face,” and be “liberated” and attain Sambhoga Kaya or Nirmana Kaya. To achieve this, the dead

³⁶ Jung’s commentary on the *Bardo Thödol* in *Psychology and the East*, n. 841.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 849.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 853.

³⁹ E.g. Feeling pressure as earth sinking into water, clammy coldness as water turning into heat of fever, then blown into atoms or fire sinking into air. *Bardo Thödol*, p. 90.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

one must not be angry with the mourners at his funeral, for their levity or impiety. He is to “meditate on love for the mourners.”

Five methods for closing the womb-door and escaping re-incarnation are listed.⁴¹ It involves being “disgusted with sangsara” or the world of finite conditions. Finally, how to select the most advantageous re-birth constitutes the last resort and instruction.

Whatever way the Bardo Thödol is read, Dharma Kaya, or perfect Buddhahood, can be attained at any given point in the Bardo by “merging with the rainbow halo” of the deities which are at the time manifesting themselves. For example, in the Chönyid (second) Bardo, peaceful Deities manifest themselves as “dazzling radiance of the dead’s own thought forms” for seven days. In order to gain Dharma Kaya, the guru repeatedly addresses the dead one, “O Noble One,” and advises him not to fear the dazzling light, and not to be drawn to the dull light which leads toward re-incarnation. At the close of each day, there is a “refrain” of “wandering in Sangsara,” and asking the deities to be one’s rear-guard against the fearful “ambuscades of the Bardo,” so that one may be “placed in a state of all-perfect Buddhahood” (Dharma Kaya).⁴²

All through the Bardo experience, the main criterion for reaching Dharma Kaya, is to recognize the Deities as one’s “own inner thought-processes.”

The *Bardo*, in effect, comes down on the side of the after-life being a projection of your own mind. However, is the Dharma Kaya⁴³ or the state of “all-perfect Buddhahood” also a “projection”? No, since the “Dharma is said to be nowhere save in the mind.”⁴⁴ And the mind is deemed to be real or the “giver” of illusory “given” things! Thus the projections of the mind involve seeing oneself and recognizing that the Deities are projections of one’s own mind. Recognizing the deities is thus to recognize the reality of

⁴¹ 1. Form single resolve; 2. Meditate on deities as a mother; 3. Meditate on how evil is the Karma one has, how repulsive Sangsara; 4. Meditate that unreal things are false, and they will dissipate; 5. Rest mind in uncreated relaxed state, as water pouring into water.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴³ Or either *Sambhoga Kaya* or *Nirmana Kaya*, depending on the level of Bardo from which Nirvana is attained.

⁴⁴ Jung, Commentary in W.Y. Evans-Wentz (Ed.) *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, p. lxi.

one's own unconscious—to which Jung devoted his psychiatric skills for western minds besieged with neuroses and psychoses!

A union with one's own inner processes, and becoming one with them, is what constitutes Dharma Kaya. Since "rootless Dharma" is the inmost of a person's being, being "at one" with it takes on the aspects both of an inner experience and of an outwardly experienced reality which is part of that inner union. The phenomenon of an after-life is one such projection of one's inner life. At first it is seen as distant from the ego-consciousness, but then reverses to become the reality. The ego, as Jung says, "surrenders to the phantasmal forms"; those very forms then become the reality, and one's earlier ego-consciousness becomes the fantasy!

Should this reversal happen to a westerner one fine day, it would result in a neurosis from "fragmentary psychic systems" which have tendencies most divergent from the conscious plane.⁴⁵ In other words, contact your unconscious without preparation, and you go crazy! Since the "indisputable autonomy" of these systems pose a threat to consciousness, Jung compares it to the Bardo where the "dead will disintegrate." (Ibid)

Thus both the western neurosis and the eastern "face to face" Bardo with one's self, which then disintegrates, are to Jung's mind one and the same psychic process. In the East, the spirit of the dead one "goes within" and experiences the Bardo states, while in the West, the spirit "goes above" himself and experiences a Near Death Experience. Jung calls the Western tendency "extraversion," which makes "man small and the grace of God everything," while the "introversion" in the East holds that "man is God and he redeems himself."⁴⁶

So we ask, How does the East "going within" to become one with the "rootless Dharma," correlate with the West "going up to be with God"? If one from West and one from East went through the Bardo or NDE state together, would their distinct backgrounds "project" their inner selves into different "experiences"? Would they go through it together or apart? Are they the same, varied only by conditioning and expectation?

⁴⁵ Jung, Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, ns. 109, 111.

⁴⁶ Jung, *Great Liberation*, p. xxxiv.

Perhaps the beginning of an answer comes from an unexpected western input, through Moody's book, *Life After Life*.

d) The Near Death Experience

As in the Bardo, a *sequence of events* is reported by independent witnesses, all of whom underwent a *near death experience*. (NDE) "What happened when I was dead" is now a report made possible by western technology resuscitating those who would otherwise have died.⁴⁷

Dr. Raymond A. Moody Jr.⁴⁸ collected a number of these experiences (ca. 150). Although no two of them were exactly the same, there was enough of a consistent "overlap" to build a typical sequence:

Someone dies, and when in greatest distress, hears, "S/he is dead." A loud ringing or buzzing is heard, and he "moves rapidly through a long dark tunnel." He finds himself "outside his physical body," but can still see it; he is upset that doctors and nurses try to resuscitate it.

Growing used to his new "body," he meets others including dead relatives and friends. Later, a "being of light" meets him, asking a non-verbal question to evaluate his whole life. One's whole life is then "instantly and panoramically played back."

A border or barrier is approached, a kind of limit between earth- life and permanent after-life. No one reports crossing that limit. He then finds he has to go back, which he now resists. His feeling of peace is intense. Yet somehow he is reunited with his physical body. He tries to tell others what happened, but no one believes him so he stops trying.⁴⁹

Life After Death: Projection or Reality?

The phenomenon of life after death always seems attached to someone *still here*. For example, Jung himself or his patients were contacted by

⁴⁷ Ironically, Western technology can now resuscitate independent witnesses who verify Eastern esoteric tradition! The NDE is thus the Western version of the Bardo, for the experiences are similar. So, too, the Western concept of God in heaven is another version of the Eastern concept of "rootless Dharma" or "god" dwelling within everyone.

⁴⁸ Moody, *Life After Life*. Moody began his investigation in 1965 after hearing from a colleague his "fantastic account of what happened to him while he was 'dead'." p. 14.

⁴⁹ Moody pp. 23-24. Moody also compares several elements of the NDE with the Bible, Plato, the *Bardo Thödol*, and Swedenborg.

spirits, and the guru who has memorized the *Bardo Thödol* either helps the “dead one” through the stages or recalls what will happen next when it is his turn to be the “dead one.” And Moody’s subjects depended on their physical bodies and returned to them. In all cases, someone was still “here.” Life after death could just be the projection of a living mind.

Although both Jung and the *Bardo Thödol* present life after-death as a projection of the mind, yet, as was said, that projection can be “experienced” in such a real fashion that the “unconscious psyche” is deemed to be the “real self.” Thus what is “projected,” first thought of as a fantasy, becomes the “reality.” As we saw already, the Yogi who dreams “you,” is real, and the “you” he dreams of is the illusion.⁵⁰

This dichotomy between reality and illusion can also be seen in several common elements in the *Bardo* and the NDEs.⁵¹ But there is also the *third* alternative (see Introduction above): reality may in fact manifest itself *only in terms of illusions!* Short of actually dying, the NDE “limit” or “border” can never be crossed, and so the knowledge of the after-life is always tied to physical existence and its projections. As Moody puts it: “The other side...can only be glimpsed, while we are still in physical bodies ‘through a glass, darkly.’”⁵² We are by our physical reality permanently restricted from seeing any spiritual reality.

a) Christ’s Resurrection

Perhaps the resurrection of Christ is one exception to this restriction. If for the sake of the argument we accept the Athanasian Creed’s statement: “As soul and body are one man, so God and Man are one Christ,”⁵³ by that

⁵⁰ Similar evidence is quoted by Moody from the Bible: that the body is sown in corruption, but rises incorruptible; that the celestial body is without limitations, etc. (cf I Corinthians 15). Plato also speaks of “crossing to the other shore” (e.g. Charon and the Styx in Greco-Roman mythology), the soul losing its clear awareness by being born into the world. Thus death “re-awakens” the soul to recognize its true nature.

⁵¹ Moody pp. 119-122. Common elements in *Bardo Thödol* and among Moody’s subjects: noises heard when leaving the body, seeing but being unable to respond to those near your body, passing through solid objects, travelling almost instantly, seeing “great lights” which would otherwise dazzle, and one’s life reflected as in a mirror and shown as it actually was.

⁵² Moody, *Life After Life*, p. 98.

correlation, just as the human "soul" is embodied in flesh and blood, so God is embodied as Christ. If God is the "Prime Mover" of philosophy, or Zeus on Olympos, then in Christ He "begets Himself" into the world of mankind. Thus the "power of the Highest overshadowed Mary". (Luke 1:35 cf. Hosea 2:23, "I will sow her for Myself in the earth") That would make Christ's "soul" to be the "Father," just as our Psyche is our inmost.

Jung turns that "inmost" into psychic reality, not any god. He comments that the "enlightened European" has "left such phantoms of gods far behind" as exist either in western or in eastern thought. Still, the "psychic facts responsible for the birth of the gods" are still within us! Thus "the gods have become diseases: Zeus no longer rules Olympos, but the solar plexus."⁵⁴

If this too happened with Christ, by this analogy the Father (= Zeus, or "First & Alpha") came down to be embodied in the Son (= solar plexus, or "Last & Omega"). Christ was thus as a body on earth having the Father as a soul within Him. Jesus could thus "go within" to consult the Father, (His own soul) and the "soul" on occasion spoke to Him, and was heard as though someone else (cf. "some thought it thundered" cf. John 12:29) Thus the statement, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father," (John 16:28) can be understood in Jungian terms: the "conscious Ego" is the embodiment of the "self" in the world, and after death the ego is united with the self as in Dharma Kaya. In Christ the parallel would be that the Body is resurrected and united with the Father so that the Human receives the same status as

⁵³ Jesus is "God from the Beginning" (John 1:1). He was "in the world and had *made* the world" (John 1:10). He is "the Messiah" (John 4:26), and was "Jehovah, or I AM" in the flesh ("Before Abraham was, I AM." John 8:58), and "His Name shall be called, 'Almighty God, the Everlasting Father.'" He was incarnated as Immanuel, "God with us." (Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 2:23)

If we then accept that the philosophic concept of the "Prime Mover" existed in Christ as the Father or *soul* within Him (Athanasian Creed: As soul and body are one man, so God and Man are one Christ), then the Resurrection was an act of At-one-ment with the Divinity, whereby the humanity was "glorified," as mentioned throughout John chapter 17: "Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was." (John 17:5)

⁵⁴ Jung, Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, p. 113.

the Godhead. Thus "The Father [Godhead] has given all things in the hands of the Son." "In [Christ] dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

55, 56

Thus after His Resurrection, Christ "ascended" bodily, and sat at the "right hand of power," meaning "all power was given unto Him," now vested in the glorified Humanity.⁵⁷ Thus Christ both "went within" and "went above." He is a symbol of both East and West, of both "Prime Mover" and "Foundationless and rootless Dharma".⁵⁸

Both "God" and "Dharma Kaya" or the "Tao," share the quality of causelessness. They are metaphysical realities, which, of course, are unknowable in themselves. Jung warns that "Kant's '*das ding an sich*'...is invariably only a laughable presumption on the part of the human mind, which is unconscious of its limitations."⁵⁹ Jung's point is that "nothing can be determined about the unknowable."⁶⁰

We have to assume that Christ is "knowable" only in the Gospels.⁶¹ If Christ is "the Resurrection and the Life" for all of mankind, and all who

⁵⁵ John 3:25, Colossians 2:9.

⁵⁶ This suits Swedenborg's metaphor which combines God with the Solar Plexus: "There are two kinds of order...*Successive order* is like a column with steps from highest to lowest; while *simultaneous order* is like...concentric circles from the centre even to the last surface...The highest things of successive order become the inmost of simultaneous order, the lowest of successive becomes the outmost of simultaneous, just as if a column of steps were to sink down and form a coherent body in a plane." Swedenborg, *Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* n. 38, (London: Swedenborg Society, 1954).

This helps account for the Divine on high *creating* from above, yet being also within the lowest soil as a germinating or *procreative* principle of all vegetation.

Similarly, the "human mind with everyone is in successive and simultaneous order." This accounts for the "malignity" of an evil act which may appear outwardly innocent (Swedenborg *Apocalypse Revealed* n. 678). Also for the inmost innocence of the human psyche, first seen in infants, but later in the "second childhood" of old age. Similar to Taoist: remaining a child, not becoming a child again (*Secret of the Golden Flower*).

⁵⁷ "Now is the son of Man glorified, and God will glorify Him in Himself." John 13:31,32.

⁵⁸ "That unique One Mind is foundationless and rootless, the Non-Created is the Non-Visible." *Great Liberation*, p. 236.

⁵⁹ Jung, Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, p. 135.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ However, the recently publicized "Dead Sea Scrolls" contains one fragment of five lines of text, describing "a leader of the community put to death" mentioning "piercings" and "wounds," the "Branch of David," "Root of Jesse". "This shows that the idea of a [Messiah who would suffer and die] was not an idea unique to Christianity" (Michael Wise, Univ. of Chicago professor of Aramaic. *The Record*, Nov 1991)

“believe in Him though he were dead, yet shall he live,”⁶² then it follows that regardless of life after death being either a projection or a reality, life here has strong moral consequences: *what are the consequences of this life in one’s after-life?*

b) **“Mirror of Life.”**

Jung gave supernatural phenomena “the benefit of the doubt for experience’s sake, and credited the dream images with reality.”⁶³ As seen already, Jung felt that reincarnation demonstrates only the “phenomenon of the *belief*,” not of “reincarnation” itself. Yet if there is anything beyond death, he says it is a “continuation of the psychological life in old age.”⁶⁴ This would mean that life here does affect what happens after death. “Our deeds follow after,” he says.⁶⁵ Any after-life would thus mirror one’s mortal life, or be a continuation of it.

The same phenomenon is found in the Bardo. The “mirror” in the last or Sidpa Bardo, shows up the dead one’s entire life. The same goes for Moody’s subjects where the “Being of light” evoked one’s whole life in a detailed review. One subject reports “walking from my very early life, through each year of my life, up to the present.”⁶⁶ Swedenborg actually claims that this experience is what is meant by the “Book of Life.”⁶⁷

All these similarities cause Moody to ask, “How is it that...Tibetan sages, the apostle Paul, Plato and Swedenborg all agree so well, both among themselves and with the narratives of [NDE] individuals?”⁶⁸ And of Swedenborg, Moody writes: “The correlation between what he writes of some of his spiritual experiences and what those who have come back from close calls with death report is amazing.”⁶⁹

⁶² John 11: 25.

⁶³ Jung, *Memories*, p. 309.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁶⁶ Moody, “The Review,” p. 66.

⁶⁷ Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell* (1758) n. 463: “Man’s ‘Book of Life’ means that all things both done and thought are inscribed on the whole man, and appear as if read in a book when called forth from the memory, and as if seen in effigy when the spirit is viewed in the light of heaven.”

⁶⁸ Moody, p. 128.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86-88.

Are all these instances “projections” of a life after death, or are they glimpses of the “reality”?

I believe that life after death is the reality of which different peoples and cultures have glimpsed a plethora of versions, just as the “five blind men and the elephant” each described a part of the whole. But there *was* an elephant! So there *is* life after death beyond just a projection from being connected with the still alive body.

c) Forgetting You Are Dead

By contrast, the feeling of being *dis*-connected with your body arises when the dead person “does not at first realize that he is dead.” Moody points out that this is found both in Swedenborg and the Tibetan Book of the Dead, a work which Swedenborg could not possibly have read since it was not even translated until 1927.⁷⁰

Jung agrees that any “connection between Swedenborg and the Bardo Thödol is completely unthinkable.”⁷¹ Even American spiritualists, adds Jung, were totally unaware of Swedenborg, but still knew that the “dead were unaware of their own deaths!”⁷² But surely, if one is unaware of one’s own death, it means that the reality of life after death *is* more real than the illusion of life here. With both East and West having subjects who experience such a reality, are there other parallels?

d) East-West Parallels.

Are there then parallels between the Western religious / philosophical ethos and Eastern? Does Western “hell fire” where “their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched” (Isaiah 66.24, Mark 9.44) parallel the Eastern “Strike! Slay!” of the Sidpa Bardo? Is this the “infernal fire” Swedenborg describes as springing from “every lust” which after death turns into self-imposed torment?⁷³ And is that the same as Jung’s postulate

⁷⁰ Moody, p. 88.

⁷¹ Jung, Commentary on *Bardo Thödol* n. 845.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, n. 570.

that the after-life is a “grand and terrible world, where suffering does not cease”?⁷⁴

If spiritual reality is the same for both East and West, varied only by conditioned expectations, then perhaps the “Dharma” or “Shunyata” (voidness) sought by “going within” in the East, is the same as being “drawn above” in the West. Christ said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will *draw all peoples to Myself*.”⁷⁵ This is a Christian version of transcendence above the evils of the world.

To seek the “Dharma” or the “Tao” is such transcendence, namely, rising above even the choice between good and evil, which ends in good and evil being united—“nirdvandva” or “freedom from opposites.”⁷⁶ Jung’s “transcendent function” aims to achieve the same psychological liberation in the West as “shunyata” or “nirvana”⁷⁷ in the East. Did not Christ refer to this as to “turn the other cheek”? Retaliation only turns the pain suffered into anger against the smiter starting a vicious cycle of revenge. By turning the other cheek evil is not just avoided but transcended, and so is the temptation to strike back.

Better to “rise above it” as we commonly say. Even “let’s sleep on it” is a way of transcending a difficult problem in daily life.

Moral Implications on Everyday Life

The moral implications of any version of after-life for both East and West unite in saying that *life has consequences extending beyond one’s own death*. Although the “reality” can never be known until one’s own death,⁷⁸ still, value systems across both time and culture are united in having rules

⁷⁴ Jung, *Memories*, p. 321.

⁷⁵ John 12:32, emphasis added.

⁷⁶ Jung, *Two Essays*, n. 367.

⁷⁷ Shunyata is “voidness,” and is “unbecome, unborn, unmade, unformed, a predicateless Primordial Essence.” Nirvana is “transcendence” over what is become, born, made and formed, thus a noumenal state of inseparable unity, or the annihilation of appearances. (*Great Liberation*, pp. 1, 2).

⁷⁸ Unless one believes Swedenborg’s evidence as stated in *Heaven and Hell* (1758). After reading it in braille, Helen Keller uttered the famous line: “One thing I know; whereas before I was blind, now I see.” See *My Religion*.

for living! For example, every society has rules against theft, adultery and fraud; taboos exist against coveting and blasphemy; every culture has “holy days”.

Since the preservation of society is not a sufficient reason for obeying the “laws of God,” I conclude that life after death is the reality which alone can account for such laws being followed. All versions of this reality can admittedly manifest themselves only in terms of projections, since the effect of being still attached to the physical body can be eliminated only by actual death. By this argument, the reality of life after death will make sense out of the partial “glimpses, as through glass darkly,” which both the Bardo and the NDEs have provided.

Although Jung said “there is no proof of continuity of the soul after death,” there is, however, the fact that so many peoples, both East and West, and through ancient to modern times, have come up with so similar answers!⁷⁹ In the West, as Jung keeps reminding us, the ego-consciousness is as separated from the unconscious as it is united to it in the East. Yet it is precisely in the West that Moody unveils the NDE, as just as real an experience of an “after-life” as is found in the Bardo.

If the comparison between East and West be treated as a hypothetical “psychological experiment” where the West is the “experimental group” and the East the “control group,” then our findings would be that the separation of the conscious from the unconscious in the “experimental group” will result in *different types* of cultures and practices from the “control group”. The “control group,” where the unconscious psyche is part of everyday life, would then seek in general to attain Dharma Kaya, or the Tao; their life-style revolves round this, and this is reflected in the sameness of everyday life in the East. The “experimental group” tourists

⁷⁹Thor Heyerdahl argued that parts of South America and the Pacific were populated from Africa, and demonstrated this feasibility by the Kon Tiki expedition. But regardless of such possible ancient pioneering ventures, cultures with no possibility of contact have similar myths, e.g. the Algonquian Indians’ myth of the Flood, Australian aborigines of the “rainbow serpent” as part of the Creation (cf. Eden and serpent)

The final “proof” of life-after death, is a) the widespread nature of the belief over time; b) the impossibility of the mind thinking apart from sensory input; and c) the neural synapse wiping each sensory impulse “clean,” so there is no continuity between object and sensation. Given a,b, and c, “God” and “life after death” can only exist as phenomena if there are noumena to account for them! EES

[West] visit the Eastern temples and gape in awe, and yet the drab life is only a dream-version of European life.⁸⁰

In the West, the "experimental group" consists of the Judaeo/ Christian and Moslem traditions, which all speak of "redemption." Muslim and Christian eschatology include a specific after-life as a reward for obedience to God's or Allah's will. And the Judaic tradition associates this reward more closely with "reaching the Promised Land." But the life is consequently "target oriented," i.e. the "promised land," or visiting Mecca, or "going to Church and to heaven." And the West and Middle-East have their share of architectural masterpieces as symbols of that extraverted faith.

Yet the psychological effect is the same in East and West: conduct your life along some specific lines, and you will be rewarded hereafter. (If it were not so, many souls of the departed would demand their money back!)

The "searching of one's ways," i.e. "repentance" or "transcendence," is also a common chord struck between West and East. Similar ethics teach those in the West to go within ourselves, and "cleanse first the inside of the cup and platter," or in the East, to "recognize your own inner thought-processes." Then, the reward: "I will draw all peoples unto Myself," or "compass Buddhahood, and obtain Dharma Kaya."

First one goes within, then one goes up. The solar plexus, the home of diseases which have replaced the influence of the gods, becomes the route back to the gods! That has to be the almost instinctive purpose, or else there would be no such dedicated followers. "Know thyself," said Confucious and Socrates. Once you know yourself, one's relation to other people is affected; "Love Thy neighbour as Thyself" say both Testaments.

And how do we care for the neighbour? Cain complained about this burden: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) A young rich ruler asked the Lord the same question, and He told the story of the Good Samaritan. No one can deny the message: all human beings need to care

⁸⁰ "...India is the real world, the white man lives in a madhouse of abstractions...I did not see one European in India who really lived there. They were all living in Europe...in a sort of bottle filled with European air...; one would be drowned in all the things which we Europeans have conquered in the imagination. In India they become formidable realities directly you step beyond the glass wall." Jung, *Psychology & the East*, p. 90.

for each other. From going within, one must next proceed laterally to fellow-members of society. Hence Schiller's "Ode to Joy" via Beethoven: "Alle Menschen werden Brüder, wo dein sanfter Vlügel weilt."⁸¹ Religion would thus be worthy of the name only if people cared for the neighbour.

One can of course always try a careless system, such as Atheism. The Soviet Union did, and by all accounts millions have died from "carelessness." It has just been demonstrated how long such an experiment can last: at most two generations. (1917 - 1988, or 70 years) Perhaps China will prove the same deepseated religious instinct by the year 2017, or 1947 plus 70 years! By then a generation will come and request the return of religion.

Is religion a human "instinct" perhaps? If so, is a belief in God a projection, or is God a reality? By the *third alternative* used already regarding life after death, namely that only some reality can account for all phenomena, that "instinct" of religion depends on a transcendental reality, in this case "God." Thus without an actual God no religion could be thought of.

Can one also say, "Without actual life after death there would be no belief in it"?

This seems indicated by both Moody's subjects and the gurus or Yogis of the Bardo Thödol or other esoteric or exoteric Eastern script. Once having *tasted* the after-life, call it Dharma or Tao or the NDE, they are no longer afraid to die: "I'm not afraid to die, I know where I'm going, I've been there before."⁸² And in the Bardo, the whole idea is "not to fear the dazzling lights of the Deities, but to recognize them"⁸³ and attain the peace of Dharma Kaya.

Jung was at least certain of one thing: "When you die, your deeds follow you."⁸⁴ Jung never commits himself to any reality of life after death, so his "peace of mind" has to rest in the very constructs of the mind of which his "deeds" bear such ample witness! It is consequently logical for Jung to advise those in the West to "deepen their introverted side" so that

⁸¹ "All men will be brothers, where your soft wing rests."

⁸² Moody, p. 96.

⁸³ *Bardo Thödol*, pp. 125, 129, 143.

⁸⁴ Jung, *Memories*, p. 318.

“immortality would transfer itself from the soul to the self.”⁸⁵ Then there would be personal immortality!

To this notion Swedenborg agrees: “All who have any religion have a rational conception implanted in them that after death they live as people.”⁸⁶ Thus all people talk without thinking in terms of an after-life.⁸⁷

Conclusion

That is the parting message of this study: deepen your introversion to include an immortality of “self.” People through the ages have done so and today incorporate the phenomenon of life after death across all cultural and linguistic barriers. Does that mean life after death is a reality? Jung, by now, would know the answer. But could anything but a reality account for all the versions of it? Ideas depend on sense-experience; could such a consistent idea of life-after death persist without having a “noumenal” reality underlying the phenomenon?

But regardless of the reality, one pragmatic consequence of the belief in a life after death, is that we are “our brother’s keepers.” Whether one believes in *reincarnation* (to escape the karmic attraction to *sangsara*, or conditioned things here on earth) or *salvation* (either by a life of good works and helping others, or by Western asceticism escaping the world of evil) *the outcome* is the same: what one does here counts beyond the grave. It matters how you live, how you deal with others. “Man’s task here,” Jung puts it to us, “is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.”⁸⁸ For “Our deeds follow after us.”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Jung, *Two Essays*, n. 303.

⁸⁶ Swedenborg, *The Divine Providence* [1764] (London: Swedenborg Society, 1949), n. 274.

⁸⁷ Swedenborg lists 10 pieces of evidence of life after death: 1) No one thinks otherwise when dying. 2) Mourners place the dead “in heaven”. 3) Belief that a good life is rewarded by heaven. 4) Eulogies place the “departed” in heaven. 5) Who does not think of children who die except as little angels? 6) Who objects when anyone talks of one’s “lot hereafter”? 7) Aren’t angels shown as human beings, and not as ghosts? 8) Catholics, and Reformed, Islam & Africans, believe in Saints or holy people now in heaven. 9) Desire for immortal fame leads to heroism, from the source of life after-death. 10) The idea of life after death is part of the inner quality of the psyche (Swedenborg, *Divine Providence* n. 274).

⁸⁸ Jung, *Memories*, p. 326.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

Epilogue

So much for the “terms familiar to the learned world.” Now for the “truths of the Word,” from which the argument is to proceed.⁹⁰

The common elements found in both the ancient *Bardo Thödol* (c. 700 AD) and Moody’s modern *Life After Life* (1975) are not so remarkable when seen in the light of the Writings of Swedenborg, for in them life after death is such a constant reality that many readers become as convinced of it as if they actually had died and seen it for themselves! All become fully conscious of that reality at least by the third day after their demise. All people, regardless of race, creed, sex, or age when death comes—from infants to the very elderly—experience an automatic resurrection.

This resurrection is into a conscious, individual survival, with a full memory of one’s entire earth-life. As Moody’s subjects verify, that world is more real than this one. Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell* (1758) spelled out that same reality two centuries earlier. However, whether one goes to heaven or to hell after resurrection depends on how one has lived, well or ill. But both the good and wicked share what is commonly called “The Book of Life.” On this we read:

In disclosing his acts to a man after death, the angels...look into his face, and their search extends through the whole body, beginning with the fingers of each hand, and thus proceeding through the whole...All things of the thought and will are inscribed on the brain...and so likewise on the whole body...Man as a whole is such as he is in his will and its thought, even to the extent that an evil man is his own evil and a good man his own good. This shows what is meant by the *Book of Man’s Life* spoken of in the Word, namely that all things that he has done and...thought are inscribed on the whole man, and when they are called forth from the memory they appear as if read in a book; and when the spirit is viewed in the light of heaven, [all his deeds and thoughts] appear as in an image.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Cf. *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 129.

⁹¹ *Heaven and Hell*, n. 463.

In other words, when angels are present, anything you have said or done can be recalled "to the very life," so there is no denying what happened on earth. It is as if you witness the original participants performing the original event! Thus,

...all minutest particulars may be drawn from one's memory, even those that he had forgotten in the world...Every least thing that a man has thought, willed, spoken, done or even heard and seen, is inscribed on his internal or spiritual memory, and what is there is never erased, since it is also inscribed on the spirit itself...I know that this sounds like a paradox and is difficult to believe; but still it is true.

Thus Swedenborg warns: Let "everyone believe that all things...are then laid open as clear as day."⁹²

By virtue of this *Book of Life*, all are judged by the evidence taken from their own memory. Each person "reads himself" to his destination, so to speak.

Perhaps that notion is both vaguely foreboding and strangely comforting in a world of many gross injustices. But more short range, it helps explain why both in the *Bardo Thödol* and in Moody's NDE the subjects experienced a kind of "mirror" that showed their entire life in review. But it has always happened that way since mankind began! Now we just know it as a fact from several separate sources.

And this mirror of life also puts reincarnation into a new light. The inerasable *Book of Life* and the fact that each person "reads himself" to his destination, makes reincarnation *passé*. There is no need for another turn in life, since all the essential purposes are fulfilled. Infants and youths grow to maturity after death. Adults return to youth. Thus *metempsychosis* is called an "absurd notion" (TCR 171). The *déjà vu* experience at its root is just "a spirit speaking from his own memory with the man," making him recollect "something which [he] had never heard or seen" (HH 256). Thus a human's once-in-a-life-time death and rebirth is the very fact that has

⁹² Ibid. It is comforting to know that overcoming our weakness here pre-empts such embarrassing experiences there!

spurred the reincarnation notion. Originally, it referred just to re-birth, and so it should today.

The *Bardo Thödol* as a book, according to New Church interpretation, would hail from the deeper wisdom of what is called the Ancient Church. This Church began after the pre-historic “Flood”—which was a purely psycho-spiritual event—and was located in the Holy Land, all through North Africa, “Europe,” Asia Major—perhaps even across the Bering Strait into the ancient Americas and out among the Pacific islands and Australia. That was the ancient world when monuments were constructed. It came to an end in Roman times. But leading up to it was an age of wisdom and knowledge of spiritual things.

This wisdom of old, the Writings of the New Church explain, was known as the “Science of Sciences.”⁹³ It entailed knowing the heavenly counterpart for everything in creation. Everything on earth “co-responds” to its originating “cause” in the spiritual world. But this dualism comes with a twist. The “spiritual realm” of causes is itself shown to be an effect of a still higher realm, God-Man and His first manifestation as a “Sun” in heaven. So creation is really trinal:

All things were created by the Lord through the sun of the spiritual world, but not through the sun of the natural world...[I]n the [spiritual] sun, which is the first proceeding of Divine Love and Wisdom, is the end of all things; in the spiritual world are the causes of all things; in the natural world [universe] are the effects of all things...No created thing is possible in which these three are not [present].⁹⁴

These facts were known in the Ancient Church or the ancient religious systems. This trimary universe overcomes all the shortcomings post-Enlightenment philosophers perceived in the “dualistic” view of the Uni-

⁹³ See Erik E. Sandstrom, “The Science of Sciences; a Unique Human Era” *The New Philosophy* vol. 89, no. 2 (April-June, 1986), pp. 77-97.

⁹⁴ Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, n. 154. Other teachings clarify how God created the physical universe. See also Erik E. Sandstrom, “Towards a Universal Chronology,” *The New Philosophy* vol. 86, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1983), pp. 70-195.

verse. That lore containing the trinary view of the Universe, was written down in pre-historic times, in what is termed "The Ancient Word." It predates the Old Testament by some millenia, and is quoted by Moses.⁹⁵ This document is said to exist to this day in China.⁹⁶ It is generally believed in New Church circles that it was from that ancient document that Hindu, Taoist and later Confucian and Buddhist religions derived their ethos. Thus, any religious link-up between East and West is bound to benefit by including the Ancient Word in the reckoning.⁹⁷

As the "Ancient Church" declined—meant by the story of Babel—the Ancient Word was "lost." Its meaning became too deep for later generations and was preserved only among a select few for protection. It was written in a kind of "code" for comprehending how the two worlds—three if God is included—relate to each other.

From the Ancient Word we surmise the *Bardo Thödol* became just one of several strands of ancient lore that was held in high regard even down to later generations. The knowledge from the Ancient Word about life after death spurred meditation as a means to contact that lost after-life. The resulting transcendental meditations were "matched," as it were, to that earlier written knowledge or lore.⁹⁸ Thus such Hindu concepts as "Atman" and "Purusa," referring to the Unknowable God above and within all, would stem from the Ancient Word.

But this match-up only *seems* remarkable. If life after death is a "given," then people of different backgrounds experience the same stages of awakening. That is why the Tibetan Book of the Dead just "happens to match" Moody's discovery of the NDE! What Swedenborg relates of his own

⁹⁵ "Wars of Jehovah," "Enunciators" cf. Numbers 21:14, 27-30; "Book of Jasher," cf. Joshua 10:13, II Samuel 1:18 "Is it not written in the book of Jasher?"

⁹⁶ Swedenborg, *Apocalypse Revealed*, n. 11, *True Christian Religion*, n. 279. "Seek for it in China, and perhaps you will find it there among the Tartars."

⁹⁷ The largest extant portion of the Ancient Word was incorporated by Moses as Genesis chapters one through eleven!

⁹⁸ Jung sternly warns those in the West against Eastern meditation—an easy route to insanity. Yet he also advises us to improve our contacts with the subconscious.

experimental “resuscitation from death,”⁹⁹ can thus be taken as an authentic account which serves as a “model” for both ancient and modern examples of spiritual or sub-conscious contacts.

People in the West, Jung repeatedly explains, are either starved of any contact with the unconscious or afraid of it. The one starved of contacts with his unconscious gains it say by anything from meditation to alcoholism, and the one afraid of that contact finds it in day-dreaming or haunting dreams! But in the East, and among indigenous peoples, the unconscious is already incorporated in a ritualistic life and culture. They need no psychiatrist, since the leper and the slain ox are witnessed directly.

But the Writings of the New Church make manifest to the rational mind, in the plainest possible manner, the entire world of the unconscious. They form as it were a “rational grid of comprehension” which may be laid over both Eastern and Western mentalities. From the safe ground of the Writings there is much to explore without danger. There is no intrinsic need to experience meditation, since this is replaced by a more direct and open-eyed rational comprehension. The resulting knowledge is as certain as experience could ever be. But if meditation is entered into, the Writings serve well as the “guide.” Jung, too, read “seven fat volumes of Swedenborg.”¹⁰⁰ And his warning of insanity if Westerners enter too deeply into Eastern practices rings truer for Jung’s own bout with insanity!

So Jung’s learned summary—“Man’s task here is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being...For our deeds follow after us”¹⁰¹—is clarified by the Word to mean: Light is God-given if we but turn to Him in His Word, since He is the Source of the Dualistic Universe. And our deeds follow after us in an eternal after-life in heaven if we but choose it freely by our life here on earth. □

⁹⁹Swedenborg was given to experience dying without actually dying—so as to be able to write it down for all mankind’s benefit. See *Heaven and Hell*, n. 449. Furthermore, Swedenborg outlined seven stages between death and reaching one’s final lot: 1) celestial angels attend man’s spirit; 2) spiritual angels attend; 3) then good angelic spirits; 4) life returns as usual as it was in the world; 5) hidden things increasingly surface for all to see; 6) training for heaven; 7) and finally entry to heaven. Evil doers only go through 1 - 5, then 6) entry to hell. They need no training.

¹⁰⁰ *Memories*, p. 99.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

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