

Review of: "First Days after Death - A Jungian Comparison between the Beliefs of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Post-mortem Experiences in the Tibetan Bardo Plan"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Review-endorsement.

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The work is incredibly relevant and interesting. A deep comparison of the Western tradition of psychoanalysis and its variations (Jung, Perls, Lacan, etc.) with Buddhist practices allows us to come closer not only to understanding the similarity of studying the processes occurring in the human psyche, but also to realizing reality as it is (tathātā) - that reality, establishing a connection with which requires overcoming the fear of being mistaken.

However, as a scholar of the Buddhist studies, I would like to pay attention to a more correct use of both Buddhist terms and Buddhist concepts, so that research is interesting for both psychologists and philosophers.

The first comment concerns the use of the term "soul."

I am not going to enter into a polemic about the term "soul" in the Christian or Jungian understanding. But I will allow myself a comment on the understanding of the soul in Buddhism.

Buddhism recognizes neither the existence of a single god-creator, nor an eternal soul (as a substance), nor salvation - the doctrine of anātmavāda ("selflessness") tells us about this. Instead, Buddhism, while accepting the maxim of the Four Noble Truths about suffering, offers a path of liberation from suffering by getting rid of prejudices, beliefs, clouding emotions and all sorts of illusions about reality of self and the world around (practically, requiring the abandonment of conceptualization and imagination) in order to finally know that reality in direct yogic direct cognition (yogi pratyacṣa), rather than viewing it in reflections of emotional imaginations or intellectual reductions.

This is indeed not easy to explain. And Buddhist teachers of the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma (with which the emergence of Tantric Buddhism, the so-called Vajrayana Buddhism, to whose tradition the book Bardo Tödol belongs; not to mention that Bardo Tödol belongs to the school of old translations of rnying ma, which has a very specific, even within the framework of Tantric Buddhism itself, classification of practices of comprehension of reality) warn us about it. And this is related to the very nature of reality - it is inexpressible in symbol, image, or psyche-mental state (that is, anabhiḷāpya).

It is through the dreams and nightmares of the fading gross consciousness, in which karmic imprints (i.e. the traces of our actions in the past and the memories associated with them) were imprinted, that the monk does not lead, but accompanies the dying person towards more subtle states of mind, and, eventually, to the complete dissolution of the mind of the dying person, reciting certain linguistic formulae that can provide the traveler with fearlessness on the way to reality, the essence of which is emptiness (that is what tradition says). And here it is appropriate to recall the essence of the Mahayana Buddhist teaching, the core of which is the maxim: emptiness is form, form is emptiness. And this is not nihilism.

The second comment has to do with the concept of "bardo".

"Bar Do Tos Grol" - literally this short title of the book translates to "Liberation through listening in the middle of a pair".

And so I would love, as far as possible, to give some explanation of the essence of the bardo. Unfortunately, the dictionary translation of the Buddhist term bardo or antarābhava ("intermediate existence") does not capture the essence of this concept. Bardo is neither an intermediate state, nor a state at all - bardo is caught in the mediate of states, where the flow of time is interrupted. Rather, the bardo is like an abyss, a break in the chain of mental constructs and experiences associated with interpreting and remembering of inner experience. It is an exit not even into the transcendental, but to the transcendent described in Kant's philosophy. It is reminiscent of Lacanian unbridgeable gap between the subject and true knowledge that suddenly becomes obvious. In the practice of deep meditation, bardo is realized as a preparation for the main event of life, the main gap - death to utilize the breaking of karmic chains and turn death into liberation rather than a new rebirth in saṃsāra.

One such practice, quite well known in the West, is the practice of Chöd. It gives an opportunity not on the deathbed, but in awareness to conduct a meditation of preparation for the meeting in the bardo.

Therefore, speaking about the bardo, we can only speak about its interpretation in one or another author's performance. And this line should be followed - for example, to say that is the bardo as interpreted by Jung (I mean the phrase from the article: "The Bardo Thödol is an initiatory process aimed at restoring the divine nature of the soul.").

The third comment is about quotations.

I would like to say a few words about lamas of European origin, to whom there is always a temptation to cite, for they speak an understandable mother tongue. But often their discourse is filled with Christianisms or sophisms. Without detracting in any way from their spiritual realization, it is worth realizing that when we begin to dissect Buddhist concepts, we should additionally refer to the texts of those scholars who received the traditional education in a Buddhist monastery (starting from early childhood for 16 years). A Western lama may be a realized master, but whether he or she has mastered the tools of Buddhist discourse enough not to distort the idea in the minds of neophytes - we don't know. So, it is worth being careful in using traditional terms and referring, if not to primary sources in Tibetan or Sanskrit, but at least to commentaries from tradition bearers or academic researchers who are incredibly careful with the text of pre-sources, terminology and adhere to corporate self-criticism.

For example, a reference to a quotation from Longchenpa is fine, but without the original phrase in Tibetan and taken out of the context of the work (not to mention its inter-contextual connections), it raises more questions than answers: "As one has departed from this Body, which was the support of the grasping of the 'self,' the absolute Reality of divine bodies and wisdom manifests unmistakably." And any inaccuracy of a literally translation or any rigidly fixed interpretation purporting to be an unambiguous translation creates a great temptation for speculation. Let us not forget, these are Tantric teachings, the texts of which are written in a special language *saṃdhi-bhāṣā* ("the twilight language") and require a particular hermeneutic approach.

Conclusions

In general, it is clear that the author raised a large number of questions and seriously processed an incredible amount of literature. The task chosen was not easy. And thanks to this, the article shows a broad perspective of a comparative study of Western religious and Buddhist tantric psycho-practices on the basis of national traditions.