

**Gurdjieff Oskiano**  
— May 30<sup>th</sup> 2024 —  
**Presentation Notes**

Human beings are special in creation because we experience different states of mind. A state is a condition, a felt, sensed or mental experience which lingers by itself. One is reminded in the Tales of the picturesque description of the man with so-called WILL, passing through many different states. On waking he is depressed, he gets angry when he breaks the mirror, he storms out of the house and later is flattered by the admiration of a lady at the next table. Everything happens to us in this world. In dreams, it can be the same, things just happen by themselves. One moment you may be flying and another moment traveling in reverse in a car. The dream has a will of its own. According to Tibetan teachings:

"Our conscious life is discontinuous, composed of one discrete moment after another, in unending succession. Each moment of experience arises, endures, and disappears. The apparent continuity of our conscious life is an illusion: we hang onto the belief in our continuity and ignore the ever-present data of discontinuity. This succession of individual moments of experience is habitually taken as an unbroken continuum that we label as "I" or "self". However, meditation reveals that at the death of each moment there is a gap, a discontinuity, before the arising of the next. It is this gap that is known, in Tibetan Buddhism as BARDO, the "in-between state." (*Secret of the Vajra World* by Reginald A. Ray, page 330)

In *In Search of the Miraculous*, G. refers to the gap in a process as a crossroad or an interval with which we are all familiar. But it may be worth highlighting that it happens all by itself:

"Now if we recall the law of octaves we shall see that a balanced process proceeding in a certain way cannot be changed at any moment it is desired. It can be changed and set on a new path only at certain 'crossroads'. In between the 'crossroads' nothing can be done. At the same time then nothing can be done afterwards and the process will continue and develop according to mechanical laws; and even if people taking part in this process foresee the inevitable destruction of everything, they will be unable to do anything. I repeat that something can be done only at certain moments which I have just called 'crossroads' and which in octaves we have called the 'intervals' mi-fa and si-do." (*In Search of the Miraculous* page 307)

Thus, unless we know what to do in the gap at the right moment the birth process goes by itself, the death process goes by itself, the dream carries on to its end and we wake up. Or for Gurdjieff, do we wake up?

The gap gives us the only possibility of waking up. Nature creates gaps, and in that space we have the opportunity to change something in ourselves: a belief, an illusion, an emotion, or an attachment.

Mme de Salzmann poignantly describes the situation in her aptly titled passage "Ferocious Egotism" (#73):

"My thought craves continuity, permanence, and its wish gives rise to my ordinary "I". This thinking is the source of fear, fear of loss, of suffering. If I do not know my total consciousness--unconscious. as well as conscious--I will not understand fear and my entire search will go astray and be deformed. There will be no love, and my only interest will be in ensuring the continuity of this "I", EVEN AFTER DEATH. " (*The Reality of Being* page 159)

One of the insights that my Tibetan friend Khenpo gave me was that such a mind actually

seeks out the Bardo in order to be reborn. That is, such a mind is suffering so much and distressed that it misses the gaps in the Bardo, those moments and signs which if RECOGNIZED, could extinguish the cycle of rebirth. Instead, the mind creates itself a new body in the Bardo.

Note here that Mme de Salzman like Gurdjieff stressed the word to KNOW ourselves. In Tibetan culture it seems to me that they use the word RECOGNIZE, which of course has the idea of 'cognizing again' which is close to knowing. But it is slightly different because in the absence of a self the emphasis is on prior PRACTICE and SKILL to intervene in a moving process like death.

This brings me to the thought of creating a Second Being Body. How do we go about doing it? It has to be done before the death of the body, that is before entering the Bardo of death. The Tales mentions it is built from second being food but the formula is missing. Mme de Salzman mentions building this second being body starting on page 232 of *The Reality of Being*. In passage 110, *This Immaterial Presence in Me*, she writes:

"What in us corresponds to the role of organic life for the earth? Special organs of perception, the higher parts of the centers, receive a direct impression of a finer energy. This is perception beyond mechanical functioning, a more conscious perception. IT REQUIRES THE FORMATION OF A KIND OF NET OR FILTER THAT MAINTAINS WITHIN ITS MESH A SUBSTANCE THAT COULD BE EXPERIENCED AS A SECOND BODY. MY PRESENCE HAS TO BECOME LIKE A SECOND BODY IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THIS FINER ENERGY AND LET IT SHOW THROUGH. FOR THIS I NEED TO ACCUMULATE ACTIVE ELEMENTS THAT BEGIN TO LIVE THEIR OWN LIFE, TO CREATE THEIR OWN NATURE WITHIN THE PHYSICAL BODY, THEIR OWN WORLD AND EVENTS."

This seems like an exact description and needs more thought to understand what it is that "shows through". Is it light? If the Presence she speaks of is in us and when allowed to come out and play, it will may be luminous and illuminated (like in the term illuminated presence). Later on we will see that in the Bardo, when the senses and elements dissolve, there is a basic luminosity that arises, presumably, the mind itself or consciousness itself.

What is the nature of the gap? Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche defines Bardo as follows: "'bar' means in between, and 'do' means island or mark; a sort of landmark which stands between two things. It is rather like an island in the midst of a lake." (*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* Page 10). Notice that the gap is not a neutral space like in an old gear-shift or standard car. Remember that you put the car into the DRIVE mode and if you wanted to reverse direction you would move the stick through the NEUTRAL position into the REVERSE function? The gap is not only 'in between' two things. It is a mark or island between two things. In this metaphor it has mass or height.

It has a substance like an island. The gap has energy. Think of an axle and a wheel. The gap is between them and is where the action is. Outer space is not empty, it is full of energy. The Bardo, referred to in Tibetan as RIKPA or "basic ground", Trungpa explains that: "The concept of Bardo is based on the period between sanity and insanity, or the period between confusion and the confusion just about to be transformed into wisdom; and of course it could be said of the experience which stands between death and birth. The past situation has just occurred and the future situation has not yet manifested itself so there is a gap between the two. This is basically the Bardo experience." Though startling a description, sanity and insanity are Bardo states and I am pleased that Trungpa Rinpoche introduced the psychology view as such.

There are 6 Bardos in Tibetan Buddhism:

1. The natural Bardo of this life between birth and death.

2. The painful Bardo of dying lasting from the beginning of the death process right up until the end of what is known as the "inner respiration". This in turn, culminates in the dawning of the true nature of mind, called "ground luminosity" at the moment of death. I would like to talk of this in a moment.

3. The luminous Bardo of dharmata (dharmata in Trungpa's definition means "the essence of things as they are", the is-ness quality) which is the after-death experience of the radiating nature of mind which manifests as sound, color and light. No wonder Tim Leary and Richard Alpert used *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* for their manual of psychedelic use.

4. The karmic Bardo of becoming which is called the Bardo of the intermediate state from the end of the Bardo of dharmata until the moment we take on a new birth.

5. The Bardo of the dream state.

6. The Bardo of the meditative state.

I would like to list the actual process of death in the Tibetan tradition. This is because of 'the reason of knowing' in my line of work may lead, with practice, to the reason of understanding. I only "know" the stages but I do not understand them.

There is an "outer dissolution" and an "inner dissolution" before death. In the outer dissolution, the person loses its physical senses gradually. A person also loses the four material ELEMENTS which supported it during life: Earth, Water, Fire and Air. (There is also one non-material element called Space.) The dying process can go on for years. Remember that in the Tales a person does not die all at once but dies "by thirds"?

The outer senses like vision, taste, touch, smell and hearing can all deteriorate or partly weaken. Tibetan embryology outlines the formation of the elements and the "winds" that associate with the elements and move them. It is complex and beyond my ken at this moment. However, in the dying process:

"The elements dissolve one into the other in the following manner: as the power of an element to support consciousness is reabsorbed, the power of the following element appears. It is important to fully understand that the preceding element dissolves in the following one, and does not transform into it. Thus when we say that earth dissolves in water, we are saying that the power of the preceding element is transferred into the one following it. Earth does not dissolve independently but in fact dissolves in the element of water." (*Transcending Death* by Lama Samten page 29)

The first element to dissolve is the Earth element. The person will feel that the ground is giving way. They will feel like they are falling when they are in fact not moving. There is weakness, fear and shaking. There is loss of appetite because the Earth element supports digestion. Next the Water element dissolves into the Fire element. The fluids will start draining from the nostrils, mouth or urinary organs. They will sense thirst and dryness. Then the Fire element dissolves in the Air element. There may be fever or cold hands and feet as the temperature balance is thrown off. Finally, the Air element dissolves into the Space element. The breathing can become irregular and loud. Verbal speech is lost. All these changes are accompanied by changes in the emotions with fear, pitiful crying, longing all appearing "out of the blue".

Now we have 1 element to go and this is the Space element. Space is really the mind dissolving or the awareness dissolving into the central and side channels from whence they came in the development of the embryo. It takes 3 days after the Air element dissolves for the inner respiration and consciousness to depart. Then the person goes unconscious. There are external

signs in the formation of discharges and color changes that show that mind has been ejected. Before that, if the body is moved right after the breathing stops it is considered criminal. Stimulation by sounds, chilling, cutting etc. all will cause karmic imprints on the inner or mental consciousness. The very subtle mind or subtle consciousness registers the imprints and carries them forward into the Bardo and potentially into another life.

I thought this is important to know.

To end this section, I would like to quote some of the opening lines of the Tibetan Book of the Dead compiled and edited by W.Y. Evans-Wentz so that we can discuss and dialogue it:

"...The reader shall put his lips close to the ear, and shall repeat it distinctly, clearly impressing it upon the dying person so as to prevent his mind from wandering even for a moment.

After the expiration hath completely ceased, press the nerve of sleep firmly; and a lama or a person higher or more learned than thyself, impress in these words, thus:

Revered sir, now that thou art experiencing the Fundamental Clear Light, try to abide in that state which now thou art experiencing.

And also in the case of any other person the reader shall set him face-to-face thus: O nobly-born, 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 formed into anything as regards characteristics or color, 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, unobstructed, shining, thrilling and blissful, is the very consciousness, the All-good Buddha.

Thine own consciousness, not formed into anything, in reality void, and the intellect, shining and blissful--these two are inseparable. The union of them is the Dharmakaya, state of Perfect Enlightenment.

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

Knowing this is sufficient. Recognizing the voidness of thine own intellect to be Buddhahood and looking upon it as being thine own consciousness, is to keep thyself in the state of the divine mind of the Buddha.

Repeat this distinctly and clearly three or even seven times. That will recall to the mind of the dying one the former setting face-to-face by the guru. Secondly, it will cause the naked consciousness to be recognized as the Clear Light; and, thirdly, recognizing one's own self thus one becometh permanently united with Dharmakaya and Liberation will be certain." (pages 95-7)

Finally, a note on the book itself:

"The Tibetan work that was given this name (Tibetan Book of the Dead) by Evans-Wentz is one of many Buddhist texts known by the title BARDO THODOL, literally, "Liberation in the Intermediate State through Hearing. It belongs to the genre of Tibetan literature called TERMA, or "treasure". It is said to have been composed by the great Indian tantric master Padmasambhava, who visited Tibet. in the eighth century. Knowing that his teachings would be needed in the distant future, he dictated books to his consort and scribe (the Queen of Tibet) and buried them--sometimes in a cave, sometimes in a lake, sometimes in a pillar, sometimes in the heart of a disciple yet unborn--to await discovery when the time was ripe for their contents to be revealed to the world.

He composed thousands of such works. The book called Bardo Thodol, buried in the eighth century, had been unearthed in the fourteenth century."