

TRANSFORMATION

LIFE BEFORE BIRTH,
COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS
AND
ALTERNATE REALITIES



R A B L A Y N E Y

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COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS
AND
ALTERNATE REALITIES

R.A. BLAYNEY



AbSent Publishing

Transformation: Life Before Birth, Cosmic Consciousness
and Alternate Realities.

Absent Publishing.

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The author can be contacted at, www.rablayney.com.

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1

Awakening

Everything is illusion, until it engulfs us
so completely it becomes real.

I awoke from a dream, only to find I was inside another dream. This is how I remember being born.

It may sound strange, but there are a number of people who remember this one, singular moment. Some are even able to recall more than just that. While there are those who actually retain their lucidity when moving into a physical reality, it is odd that in our corner of the world many of us lose those memories along the way. For a great many more who live in far off regions of the globe, such experiences are actually more common than many of us here in the West are aware.

When we move from pure conscious awareness into a

physical life, the experience is a perplexing thing for anyone who remembers the event. It is disorienting while at the same time reaffirming. The transformation of existence from one form into another is something that has no similarities for most of us through everyday life, except one. Being born into the reality we come to know is quite similar to waking from a dream. It is also reminiscent of falling into a dream, from which we can not escape.

This is the closest thing to the experience of becoming born which is comparable to something we can understand while we are alive in this world. The irony is that even with that, a great many of us still do not know what to make of the separation between waking and dreaming reality. This is why it is so difficult to explain what lucid awareness is like when we pass from an ethereal existence into one that is physical. Nevertheless, what follows is my best attempt to describe the experience of such a mystical event.

My first awareness of physically existing came over me gradually. It pushed me from what I knew before to what was now altering my perception toward something that was still forming. I began moving from a tepid awareness into a reality I was not yet ready to embrace. The harshness of the moment became increasingly sharp. At the same time a fog began filling me up, dimming the sense of what I had always been up to that moment, the clarity becoming obscured the more this new life took shape.

It soon became clear I was changing. That sensation began turning to a form of irritation as the world took hold of my growing sense and I began to feel the tight grip of physical reality.

THE REST OF THIS CHAPTER HAS BEEN OMITTED

2

Dreamworld

What dreaming does is give us the fluidity to enter into other worlds by destroying our sense of knowing this world.

- Carlos Castaneda

In life, the closest thing to death that we know (without actually being dead) is most likely sleep. Scientists have actually noticed similarities in brainwaves when a person is sleeping and when they have recently died. That the brain continues to emit waves after death is fascinating enough on its own. What is even more intriguing is that the brain emits similar waves during such occasions as those seen in dream states.

The truth is scientists still do not know a lot about sleep, or why we dream. They are not sure how dreams

work, where they come from, let alone how thought and cognition actually manifests within the physiology of the human brain. A number of such experts go on to admit we will probably never know these things for as long as the human race exists, due to its intangible nature. To this day there are neuroscientists, such as Giulio Tononi, who are conducting in-depth research in an attempt to finally decipher the hidden meaning of dreams and varying levels of sleep. Some may call it a last-ditch effort in learning higher insight into the mind's more elusive facets.

The dream state, itself, is a topic of much speculation and the subject of countless studies conducted by scientists and researchers eager to find the hidden meaning behind the mind's rambunctious nature. While theories of why we dream and what it means have come by way of psychologists and scientists, the more subtle connotations still remain beyond our immediate understanding.

Because some states of consciousness, while we sleep, exhibit a striking similarity to having died, a number of researchers have gone far enough to describe sleep as a type of miniature death. Since existence beyond the physical world is explained by some old philosophies as our natural state of existence, it is not surprising we would return to it on a regular basis. We are constantly practicing death through sleep, testing that familiar state from where we came. As studies have shown, those people who claim to be able to project their consciousness out of their body while asleep are actually in a state that resembles death while doing so.

Ancient Egyptians believed the dreamworld was a doorway to the afterlife. They believed dreaming was the only way to truly see the meaning of existence while still

in the land of the living. By traveling into the afterlife while in the dream state, ancient Egyptians claimed to be able to bring back knowledge of what they saw. One group, known as the Cult of Osiris—Osiris was an ancient Egyptian king who became known as the god of death and resurrection—would actually seal a man in a casket and count for about eight minutes before letting him out. Nearly suffocating while inside, the person would have a Near Death Experience and then come back (hopefully) to describe what they saw while in the afterlife. It was clear, according to hieroglyphs left on walls and what had been written in Egypt's, *Book of the Dead*, that dreaming was a very important part of Egyptian culture.

Australian Aborigines, a people who have been around for more than 50,000 years, fully believe dreaming is a doorway which allows them to return to the existence they all had before coming into the physical world. The existence experienced in what they call, 'The Dreamtime', is believed to be the true reality. The Dreamtime is nothing less than an opportunity to return to that natural state from which Australian Aborigines—in fact, all of us—come.

Many old and indigenous cultures believe every dream has importance, no matter how frivolous it may seem upon waking. To many, each dream is a journey into an alternate realm of existence that is as real as waking reality. Within this philosophy it is possible to encounter other beings we have known for thousands—possibly even millions—of years. Or we can travel back to the same place over and over, feeling we have known it for ages, even though we may have never been there while awake. Anyone who has experienced a dream where they have

encountered someone, or something, and felt overwhelming emotions for what seems like no logical reason can begin to understand how these alternate realities may hold greater meaning than initially understood.

Those who have become fascinated by dreams and who have actually found themselves exploring the full potential of dreaming, know there is far more involved than merely some movie-reel of images that appear to be brought to life through the subconscious. For anyone who has immersed him or herself in dream states, it seems that dreaming offers a level of consciousness we still do not fully understand. Brain waves move onto a plane of activity quite similar to those who have experienced brief periods wherein they have qualified as clinically dead. As we fall asleep and slip further from one level of awareness into another, we flirt with the level of consciousness that seems to be death itself.

The plane of awareness that has been called the 'astral plane' would seem to be the doorway leading to the afterlife. This is what was touted by ancient Egyptians as that which led to a world where the gods actually dwell. The many tales that are recounted by medical patients who have been on the edge of death, their heart still and lifeless on the operating table while doctors and nurses struggle to bring them back, is that of their conscious awareness floating out of their body, coming to rest against the ceiling above as they stare down at the pandemonium below. Their experiences, after having been resuscitated, are commonly described as a profound feeling of well being, along with an indifference to the physical life from which they have briefly become detached. This is sometimes accompanied by visions of light and an indefinable

presence that emanates feelings of peace and love. They tell their family and loved ones, after having gone through such an ordeal, that they know there is nothing to fear and that death is not the end. So profound is their experience, usually, that they are changed forever. The world of the living is never the same for them afterward.

All of us apparently do dream. Those who claim to never dream actually do, according to studies; they simply do not remember it. In fact, most people forget their dream by the time they have climbed out of bed. Studies suggest we usually dream three to six times per night and each dream lasts between five and twenty minutes. Some studies point to even higher numbers than that.

This is all fine, but why do we experience dreams?

Dreaming is a state of conscious awareness. When we dream, our consciousness is transformed in such a way that our dreaming existence becomes reality, as far as we perceive it. It is no different than when we wake. Once awake, we find our consciousness has again been transformed. As far as we perceive our waking life, this has now become our true reality.

Some neuroscientists who have studied brain activity have come to believe that consciousness is something that does not really exist within the physiology of the brain. These scientists have theorized that consciousness continues to exist even after the brain has ceased, which could go a long way to explain why brain patterns at certain stages of sleep resemble those of a person who has recently died.

There is a fascinating chemical which is believed the brain secretes when we fall into certain states of sleep,

called dimethyltryptamine (DMT). This chemical acts as a powerful hallucinogen who some think may be responsible for producing dreams. Others have come to believe it acts as a doorway that lets us through to the afterlife. What is particularly fascinating is the theory that the brain also produces DMT during death. This has led a number of doctors to conclude that Near Death Experiences are nothing more than a hallucinogenic 'trip' the person has witnessed in the form of a vision. If this is so, the question remains, how could that person be envisioning or dreaming anything while they are supposedly dead (in the clinical sense).

As seems to be the case with many such drugs, DMT has been used in a recreational form. Those studying the affect of DMT on such users find the hallucinations bear a striking similarity from one person to another. Those using DMT as a curiosity report going to the same place as that reported by many other subjects. Users have also described encounters with beings that are strikingly similar to those witnessed from one person to the next. Stories of strange, elf-like creatures, welcoming users to their world and showing them wonders that are hard to appreciably describe through human language, appear to be fairly common.

Some have speculated that these beings may be extra-dimensional entities that exist in a parallel universe to ours. Others believe they may even be deceased people from our world who now exist in another reality. Users of DMT who have encountered these beings often experience an inexplicable familiarity and report an indescribable love toward them that transcends the physical world. Their experience and the worlds they encounter seem more real

than physical existence itself. Many can not find words with which to describe the encounter satisfactorily. What is clear is that a large number of users who experience the journey come back completely convinced that this other world, to which they just traveled, actually exists. This is quite different from LSD, mescaline or psilocybin users, who clearly feel their own experience was simply a hallucination. It is not uncommon for the DMT user to come back emotionally impacted beyond explanation and describing their experience as life altering.

Given the evidence that the worlds to which DMT grants us access appear quite similar, perhaps ancient Egyptians were more aware than we know in believing dreams truly are a gateway to the afterlife. At the very least, it appears to be an alternate existence to which dreaming may be the first step in reaching through other levels of consciousness.

If DMT acts as some sort of doorway, it seems many are opening a common door and traveling to the same place.

THE REST OF THIS CHAPTER HAS BEEN OMITTED

3

Universal Consciousness

Everything you can imagine is real.

- Pablo Picasso

As bizarre as the simplest answer may be, it could be easier to accept the reason for so many odd occurrences through our seemingly ordinary lives may be due to an unseen, interconnectedness. Even as strange as such a possibility may be, our very existence may be even stranger. If life is truly a dream, it looks as though many of us are dreaming the same dream.

Physics appears to be the great prognosticator, taking the place of what used to be the religious benefactors of our existence. What was once a fanciful and self-indulgent notion, with no way to prove (or disprove) it, is now hard science, at least for now.

As we learn the deeper subtleties of our world on all its levels, existence becomes more a construct of our creative imagination. Not only may life be a self-designed creation of our own mind, but death may be just as much an illusion as everything else we create through our conscious projection. It seems ironic that as more people become secular and dismissive of creationism, cutting-edge physicists find more evidence that life may be more spiritual than previously thought.

Just as dreams and perception enhancers (such as DMT) open up limitless possibilities for anyone eager to explore the mystical nuances of the mind, the more advanced we become in science, the more accepting we are of whatever we deem possible. As long as there is a scientific excuse for the existence of higher dimensions and parallel universes, we see these as more plausible than such esoteric notions as a Supreme Being. To anything beyond our understanding which can be scientifically excused for its audaciousness, we keep ourselves receptive to possibility.

Yet, it remains the more grandiose presumption that all of us are of a higher awareness and consciously connected to one another that keeps us at bay whenever we hear stirrings of such postulations.

If life is truly an illusion, which keeps us separated from one another, why can we not take the next leap in realizing everything is as much an altered perception as every dream we have? Can we not accept that every dream is just as real as every waking moment we live? Life is cognition, after all. What we accept as real here in the physical world, many of our fellow animals and insects see that same reality in a completely different way. As any

honeybee will admit, other forms of life see their existence and the world around them from a completely different perspective than we. Science gives each of us the exact thing we need to survive within our own environment, but only to the point that it makes enough sense to us.

How we perceive our world is completely different from many other animals. We see things as we need to in order to thrive, just as insects experience the same world from an alternate point of view in order that they are able to best survive. Some insects, birds and reptiles see the world not just through color but also through ultraviolet light, giving them a greater sense of detail and allowing them to be receptive to things we are not. All creatures experience their environment in their own way, so reality for one is not necessarily the same for another.

With all these senses and varying means of perceiving our reality, could it be we also have the means to see things beyond our own, presumed abilities?

This is what a fair percentage of us seem to believe. The idea that if other creatures of our wild kingdom are able to see the world beyond another animal's ability, perhaps we also have the means to see things beyond what is immediately obvious. After all, every one of us seems to have the skill to use intuition in order to perceive things beyond our five, physical senses. Sometimes it is nothing more than a feeling that allows us to interact with our world in a way that transcends mere physical ability.

Some of us appear desperate, at times, to declare such notions as extrasensory perception (ESP) to be real. It would, doubtless, be a breakthrough discovery to find that ESP actually exists. After all, it would mean what we perceive as our existence is just a sliver of reality. The

verifiable truth of ESP would suggest we are all, indeed, nothing more than mollusks living a confined existence with only a faint knowledge of what we have always suspected to exist beyond physical limit. If we were to discover ourselves to be merely passing travelers who briefly use our physical bodies to get from point A to point B—to find we are far beyond that generalized interpretation—our society would likely collapse under the weight of its own awakening.

Realizing we may have the power to read each others' thoughts, while at the same time influencing one another through mere will, could be a horrific proposition. We might generally play with notions of ESP but the reality is that none of us, secretly, would wish to confront it. How could we exist and continue through life, constantly worrying that others could be invading our mind and spying on our deepest thoughts? These are all things that were never meant to exist in our world. Our reality, after all, requires simplicity. As much as our meager existence is able to persist through total ignorance, the evolution of our various cultures demands the same.

Perhaps in another, much higher state of consciousness, we can indulge such prospects. For now, we simply do not have that luxury. We are already dealing with enough problems of our own doing without 'superpowers' to make things even more complicated. It is probably for the best that we do not have any sort of penchant for higher knowledge beyond what we can use to merely survive our immediate world.

For the most part, science and quantifiable studies have shown there is little evidence that any of us possess the power to dramatically change our environment through no

less than pure, mental will. There have been pretenders—Uri Geller is probably one of the most famous professed psychics, being a throwback to the CIA's failed experiments of the 1970s—who have claimed to possess superpowers beyond reckoning. During tests and measured studies, however, these self-proclaimed wizards of the psyche have fallen far short of their majestic affirmations.

Despite this exposure, there remains a loyal following that continues to believe wholeheartedly in parapsychology. Such fanaticism comes in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary. There are those who are committed to their cause, often having personal experiences that defy the measurable evidence that would dismiss psychic events.

While the more wild claims have largely been debunked through simple science, there does remain a small component of paranormal phenomenon that deserves a degree of scrutiny. It is this portion of the bizarre that has kept us from outright denying such vagaries in perception and reality. As long as there are aspects that point toward the psychological probabilities, we can not completely discount every aspect of the paranormal.

Everything we take to be reality requires a certain balance. Even if we have a full capacity for higher power, such as those that have been claimed to exist within the realm of psychic phenomenon, it may be quite counterproductive to our present existence. Imagine a hoard of adolescent Homo sapiens running amok through the streets of our cultivated cities, wreaking havoc on one another simply to exact a crude type of vengeance over the slightest variance in whatever beliefs we may harbor. We

have already seen how much destruction comes about simply through ideological difference. If we all had superpowers, it would likely not take us long to wipe each other from the face of the earth, rather than taking the long route of trying to convert everyone else in the world to our own way of thinking.

Still, we continue to hear murmurs of psychic possibilities. The evidence does not come cascading down on us; not to the point where it completely revolutionizes our way of thinking and forces us to embrace a new order. Proclaimed evidence comes in subtle form, as if there exists a consensus that most of us would not want to see the proof to such a mesmerizing discovery.

But, the other side of reality continues to walk a parallel path, constantly hinting there is more than what meets the eye. We hear those whispers in various forms. We may hear it in our dreams or through near death experiences. Then again, maybe our pets are the ones trying to tell us that clairvoyance is real and we should pay attention.

There is still something in our lives, within our world and amongst our reality, that is sometimes more than ordinary.

Everything to do with reality is life, as much as it is death. Once we realize this, all things that contradict our existence become the very essence of our being. We exist in scattered moments, burning up minutes and hours, even millennia, just for the sake of passing time. Everything to do with our concept of time is nothing more than ideological pandering to everything we pretend to know while knowing nothing at all.

Creatures of habit and hope beyond reason, we

continue to believe and struggle while doing our best to ascend. The world has no patience for self-indulgence. Still, there is that everlasting murmur. Every night we go to sleep we continue to hear it, only to soon forget it the very next day.

It is forgotten and, at the same time, never truly forgotten at all.

Life before life and life after death, and all the various incarnations of those prospects, seem to be largely wrapped up among such other variances as parapsychology. The pundits continue to claim that if one exists then surely the other must equally exist.

Many of these notions should not be taken as a conglomerate assumption, simply for lack of knowledge. The idea that we continue to exist after death, and before even being born into life, should not be blindly accepted as a rationalized conclusion that all things otherworldly simply exist for the sake of one another. That we exist and always have does not necessarily mean suddenly we can bend spoons with our mind.

Life and eternal existence is far more significant and beyond our scope of physical understanding than mere parlor tricks that suggest the realization of one does not mean all things are without reproach. If we are to exist here, the same laws apply as those that would to any of our lesser animal brothers within the same world of experience. In order to keep all things equal, we simply need to adhere to a world of clearly understood physical laws.

In keeping with our infinitely curious nature, it would be inevitable we would continue to seek out and find new

challenges that may defy our understanding of existence. Hence, the creation of quantum mechanics. If ever we needed a set of laws that could explain the inexplicable contradictions of our physical nature, it is most certainly the advent of quantum theory, along with all the bizarre uncertainty that comes with it.

It may seem our existence is woven into the fabric of plausibility. Anyone who has studied the peculiar nature of quantum mechanics soon discovers things exist as a matter of probability. In a world of physics and science, where empirically qualifying everything is the key to our physical reality, how can it be the implications are that we may exist, or we may not, depending on whether we are consciously aware of it at any given moment?

This is the reality of our ever expanding base of knowledge. The more we discover previously unrealized levels of reality and existence, the more we find everything we thought up to that point may have been deeply flawed. Just as we seem to have come to grips with reality and physics, the latest level of our understanding of the physical world reveals we really know nothing at all. The more we learn, the more it becomes evident we still have much further to go. The truth may be that for as long as we exist in the physical world we may never truly understand what is actually real.

All this may be due to the simple fact we view our reality from an imperfect perspective. We see our reality from the point of view of a finite, physical brain that interfaces with our world on a limited scale. Just as every other living creature on our planet sees things from their own perspective, we do the same. None of us are actually seeing our reality for what it truly is (whatever that may

be). It appears completely reasonable to say all reality is completely subjective, thus lacking validity.

If we stop and think of reality as a certain set of laws and nothing more, we have already locked ourselves up with no chance for higher insight.

Famous psychics used to insist they could move objects with nothing more than a thought. Within the world of parapsychology, this is termed as psychokinesis. As much as our intelligence community, encompassed by such branches with acronyms like CIA , NSA and DIA, has largely dispelled such exotic claims, there remain adherents who insist they can perform such miraculous feats.

Other purported powers include such things as psychic surgery (the removal of a disease or physical disorder through laying hands on the body) and remote viewing (seeing what someone is doing on the other side of the world by simply imagining it).

Such powers and declarations are clearly bold and daring. Those self-claimed talents of individuals such as Uri Geller, along with the ability of some to bend spoons with nothing more than their mind, have largely been exposed as parlor tricks. Despite assertions and dramatic exhibitions to convince the public such powers are real, there remains a small area of psychic phenomenon that has not been completely dismissed. Even those individuals who measure and quantify claims of precognition and telepathy do not seem to be categorically denying the possibility of these last two examples. It is these ones in particular that seem to indicate that intuition may actually hold some solid ground within the realm of the possible.

The strange thing about precognition or clairvoyance is

that the whole idea seems so lost in fantasy and popular movies that most of us can not even begin to accept such extravagant concepts. What is most interesting, however, is there seems to be an abundance of examples from people who exist in every walk of life. Such people may not even subscribe to these ideas, but have had experiences nevertheless.

Any psychic phenomenon that may have given the West, or the East, a leg up during the Cold War was never discounted and was actively explored as a possible weapon to use against global adversaries. Considering mythical tales of the past and purported instances through history, wherein prophets and oracles were alleged to merely be human beings with the power of second sight, it is no wonder our intelligence agencies were once eager to exploit such possibilities.

Perhaps it is an inevitable conclusion that scientific studies were never able to prove the existence of any psychic phenomenon that was considered viable as an active weapon. If psychic ability is anything that should be considered divine, it is probably not the lot of mankind to employ it as a tool of selfish intent to be used against one another.

As far as the scientific mind is concerned, there can be no logical explanation for even considering parapsychology as a legitimate field of study. Yet, the Central Intelligence Agency spent years researching it in an attempt to cultivate the phenomenon into a viable means of spying on their political enemies. The phenomenon of ESP was actively pursued as a potential weapon against America's enemy, whether it was Russia, China, or the communist East in Europe at the time. (From what we

know, during the Cold War the other side was also involved in exploiting such areas of diabolical pseudoscience.)

Alas, the CIA program (under the colorful codename, Star Gate) was terminated and declassified in 1995, citing that no conclusive evidence had been found to support it actually worked.

However, the idea that the mind might see things that our eyes can not, or are unable to interpret through any of our other five senses, becomes intriguing. The possibility we can sense things through a medium as esoteric as mere thought provokes impatience in some, as they scoff at the apparent absurdity. Still, others find such prospects fascinating, as well as encouraging.

It may be a delightful revelation to find we possess suppressed abilities to sense the world around us through a higher means than merely the physical. Such a discovery could suggest we are all connected through the fabric of the universe; even the very fabric of existence. Perhaps we are not as isolated from one another as commonly thought. It would also mean we are all very much the same, free to communicate with one another and equally open to influence.

For the most part, I have discounted much of ESP as a passing fancy. Since the verdict is largely still out on whether there is truly anything to it, the doorway remains open to colorful interpretations. What better medium could there be, after all, to claim a handle over powers that are difficult to prove, or otherwise disprove. It is no wonder certain individuals still exist among us who derive monetary favors from other people's desperation for an

answer beyond what they are capable of glimmering on their own. That there are those who use such hazy areas to their advantage in order to solicit wealth has surely done little to help support the argument that ESP, in any form, may be legitimate.

As mentioned above, those many negative incarnations of what may, or could, be does not necessarily preclude everything outright. To this day, I still believe there is a higher medium beyond our immediate awareness that allows us to communicate and see things in terms beyond what we may call a physical explanation. What some would call coincidence may be more than such a simple interpretation. It could be that what we might describe as a universal consciousness may explain the more intangible aspects of our own reality. Of all the variations of ESP I have explored, there appears little evidence except that one abstract concept that seems to bind us all together. This is where such notions as precognition, astral projection and telepathy may actually hold some legitimacy beyond the latest science fiction thriller at your local movie theater.

THE REST OF THIS CHAPTER HAS BEEN OMITTED

9

The Land of the Living and The World of the Dead

There is a design for why we exist in quite the way we do. The reason for that design is simple, yet elegant.

A range of beliefs pervade, along with disbelief. We choose the one with which we feel most at ease. There is no right or wrong in that decision, but it is a choice that separates us and causes the splinter between one philosophical imperative and another. We are little more than expectations teetering on a precipice of possibility.

As much as I have suggested we all come into the world with an initial sense that physical existence is false, the majority of us are taken by the world's influence as it lulls us. Human beings have proved to be great adapters to harsh environments. It is our ability to adjust to our

surroundings, without question, that makes us well suited for survival, apparently able to thrive within widely varying states of existence.

This is not by accident. After all, given the evidence of our predisposition to destroy ourselves, we seem to have a remarkable ability to rise out of the ashes and carry on with whatever new culture or civilization we see fit to impress upon this world in the wake of our latest, grand mistake. By pure example, we seem to purposely head toward self-destruction just so we can witness the result. This possibly comes out of nothing more than absolute curiosity. If we do not truly belong here, what better way to witness the trappings of physical temptation than by creating the very medium wherein we are free to watch it all fall apart, much to our amusement.

We are condemned to a painful existence. It is not for the sake of merely wasting time. There is a reason we create an environment of conflict. Without that influence over us, we would never have the opportunity to challenge it and grow into a greater awareness of ourselves. We are here for the wondrous purpose of embracing reality in its many forms and to feel that sense of being alive. Only when we are completely lost and without direction do those remarkable traits of the human soul come to light.

Many of us may have no idea why we are here, why we exist, or what purpose we could possibly lend, other than the very same reason many of our fellow mammals and critters are here.

It often seems the majority of our life in this world is to provide sustenance and a reason for others to live by our side, until that moment wherein our fellow savages realize they can not exist a moment longer without devouring our

very own essence. For many, it appears we are fated to live alongside one another until that time comes to finally die and be faced with our awakening. Only once we truly realize our repetitive nature for what it is can we cast off such trappings and move on to a higher awareness.

We live in flux in order to grow into something more. It would be redundant if there were no greater good in our purpose than simply causing each other to doubt ourselves. If we all lived completely isolated from one another there would be no growth. Nothing would be learned from having that essential contact with each other. In the end we would return to pure spirit, no more than what we were when we came into life.

Physical reality is mystical and esoteric. The essence from which we were formed is divine and Elysian. If we are eternal beings, it would make sense that we should be aware of more than what we simply see around us. For many, that sense remains disguised as “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma” (Winston Churchill's famous quote).

It may feel to many of us that this is all there is. Such an assumption remains flawed. Our consciousness moves back and forth between corporeal and ethereal reality, even while we are alive. The movements are usually subtle, but sometimes they are more disturbing than with what many of us may be comfortable.

49 Days in the Bardo

Many cultures have their own belief in what happens following death. Some are markedly similar in their

overall description of what occurs to the soul, but with differing social bents. Tibetan Buddhism gives much attention to those going through the levels of death and various spiritual encounters, along with how to traverse the afterlife. It is through teachings that are offered in life that prepare a person to face what awaits them once they have passed into death.

What we experience in life, the expectations we develop and the kind of person we become, largely sets the tone for how we will deal with things that challenge us in our afterlife. In most cases we will likely dwell in limbo, within a dreamlike state that may leave many of us unaware we are even dead. Aspects of being disconnected from our physical domain will soon come to light as we are faced with frightening challenges. For those who are prepared and mentally honed to face whatever the Bardo of the afterlife throws at them, that experience may be short lived. Anyone who sees the death state for what it is should be able to transcend the physical world before spending much time in that place between death and birth.

The term, Bardo, is a Tibetan word which means, 'in between space', or 'between places'. This disembodied limbo could be equatable to the Catholic notion of purgatory. Essentially, it is a place where we linger as we await our self-imposed fate for the soul's next phase of its journey.

In Buddhist teachings of the Tibetan philosophy (one that is sometimes evident in other Eastern philosophies) the first stage of death is what Tibetan Buddhists call the Bardo of Dying. For many, this stage tends to pass quickly. It comes in such an instant that it most likely passes unnoticed. Within that moment, however, there is a rare

chance to see pure consciousness for what it truly is. This can only be glimpsed for as long as the dead person is properly prepared and completely aware of what is happening to them. The person will be faced with the 'Clear Light', which is what ancient philosophies of the Far East refer to as 'naked consciousness'. If the Clear Light is recognized, the dead person will be able to transcend the constant cycle of death and rebirth, seeing the light as absolute truth and the reason for existence far beyond the physical realm. But, if the Clear Light is not recognized, fear takes over and the dead person remains in the Bardo to face the bizarre and confusing nature of the afterlife. There they do whatever they can to battle the confusion encountered among the nightmares of their hidden existence.

Once the person has moved into the Bardo of the afterlife—in Tibetan texts this is referred to as the Bardo of Experiencing Reality—they will spend a number of days encountering spiritual entities. These manifestations will present the opportunity for the dead person to enter the realms of enlightened beings. However, for those who have little awareness of such things, the dead person will often become disoriented and frightened as they encounter strange realities beyond their understanding. These ambassadors of the world beyond the physical are said to be accompanied by intense, blinding lights, as well as deafening sounds that will disorient and confuse the dead person. Such beings are said to possess an overwhelming brilliance that has the ability to terrify those who are easily frightened by such unearthly luminosity.

THE REST OF THIS CHAPTER HAS BEEN OMITTED