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From This Life to Liberation: The Evolution of Consciousness and the Dissolution of the "Self" in the Framework of the Six Bardos

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ABSTRACT: The system of the six bardos—the bardo of this life, the dream bardo, the meditation bardo, the bardo of dying, the bardo of dharmata, and the bardo of becoming—found in the Dzogchen and Anuttarayoga Tantra teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, constitutes an extraordinarily precise philosophy of birth and death and a model of the evolution of consciousness. Grounded in the core Buddhist ontological principles of no-self (Anātman) and emptiness (Śūnyatā), this study examines how the six bardos deconstruct the continuous flow of human life into a series of dynamic "transitional states" (bardo). The study argues that the six bardos are not merely a phenomenological description of the process of living and dying; they also constitute a contemplative paradigm for dismantling the reified notion of a permanent "self" and the fixation on solid reality.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Buddhist philosophy, "no-self" (Anātman) is not a simple denial of individual existence but a thorough deconstruction of the notion of a permanent, independent, and sovereign self. In the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, the Buddha explicitly states that the five aggregates—form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—are neither "I" nor "mine." Yet in everyday experience, people almost unconditionally believe themselves to be a continuous, unified, autonomous subject. This subject weaves body, feelings, thoughts, volition, and awareness into an apparently coherent life narrative, and on that basis confronts the world, others, and death. The question is: Where does this "self" actually come from? Is it as solid as it appears? If it is merely the product of causes and conditions, then what changes does it undergo in different stages of life, especially at the time of death and after?

The system of the six bardos found in the Dzogchen and Anuttarayoga Tantra teachings of Tibetan Buddhism provides an extraordinarily precise model of the evolution of consciousness for addressing these questions. The term bardo (bar do), meaning "intermediate" or "transitional state" in Tibetan, is usually narrowly understood as the stage between death and rebirth. In the Nyingma Dzogchen teachings, however, the bardo is expanded into six: the bardo of this life, the dream bardo, the meditation bardo, the bardo of dying, the bardo of dharmata, and the bardo of becoming. These six bardos do not merely describe the process of dying; rather, they deconstruct the entire flow of life—from waking to sleep, from distraction to meditative absorption, from birth to death, and from death to rebirth—into a series of dynamic transitional states. In other words, life itself is a continuum of bardos, and no fixed, unchanging entity runs through them.

The aim of this study is, within the framework of the six bardos, to examine how consciousness evolves across different transitional states and how the "self" is constructed, loosened, dissolved, and re-coalesced throughout this process. The article first outlines the structural mapping of the six bardos, analyzing the mode of consciousness and the characteristics of self-construction in each bardo. It then explores how six-bardo practice, through the direct introduction to recognition and awareness, brings about a transformation from a merely conceptual understanding of no-self to its direct realization. Finally, it situates the "intermediate nature" of the six bardos within the horizon of modern existential phenomenology and the philosophy of consciousness, revealing its significance for understanding the illusoriness of subjectivity, the dissolution of psychological defense mechanisms, and the construction of contemporary thanatology.

II. STRUCTURAL MAPPING OF THE SIX BARDOS: TRANSITIONAL FORMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS FROM COARSE TO SUBTLE

A. The Bardo of This Life: Construction of the Ordinary Self and Objectifying Attachment

The bardo of this life (skye gnas bar do) refers to the entire period from birth to the onset of dying. In ordinary perception, this life is the only real and stable state of existence. People regard the body as "my body," feelings, thoughts, and emotions as "my inner states," and the external world as an objective reality independent of consciousness. This cognitive structure of subject-object duality is the very soil in which self-grasping takes root.

From the perspective of Buddhist mind theory, consciousness in the bardo of this life operates mainly through the six consciousnesses—eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and mental consciousness. When the six sense faculties meet the six sense objects, the six consciousnesses arise, and in turn produce mental factors such as feeling, perception, and volition. Ordinary beings grasp this moment-to-moment stream of consciousness as "I" and grasp the objects that appear to consciousness as "mine." This "I" has three key features: first, the illusion of permanence and unity—the belief that the "I" continues from the past into the present and will continue into the future; second, the illusion of agency—the belief that the "I" is the initiator and controller of bodily and mental activities; third, the illusion of independence—the belief that the "I" is separate from and opposed to the external world.

However, the six-bardo system subverts the apparent solidity of the bardo of this life from the very outset. It points out that this life itself is a bardo: it lies in the transitional zone between the death of the previous life and the rebirth of the next, and its nature is not permanent but momentary, contingent, and conditioned. The reason people feel that this life is genuinely real

is that the coarse consciousness's objectifying attachment to the phenomenal world is so strong that it obscures the true transitional nature of existence. Therefore, the key practice in the bardo of this life is to "turn the mind toward the Dharma," weakening the dual attachment to a solid self and external reality through contemplating impermanence and realizing the selflessness of the five aggregates.

B. The Dream Bardo: Subtle Consciousness and the Loosening of Subject-Object Duality

The dream bardo (rmi lam bar do) is the state of consciousness that arises during sleep. On the surface, dreams are merely residual projections of daily experience; but within the six-bardo system, dreams are regarded as an extremely important activity of subtle consciousness. During sleep the coarse body temporarily rests, the five sense consciousnesses—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—cease to reach outward, and the mental consciousness enters a relatively independent state of activity, giving rise to dreams.

The fundamental characteristic of the dream bardo is that, although it still presents a structure of opposition between "I" and "world," this "I" is not the direct owner of the coarse body but appears as a subtle mental body; and this "world" is not external to consciousness but consists entirely of images projected by the mind itself. That is to say, the subject-object duality in dreams is only a surface appearance; in essence it is the mind's misrecognition of its own contents. This feature makes the dream bardo an excellent experimental field for deconstructing waking fixation on reality: if waking experience, like dreams, is a projection and construction of the mind, then the supposedly independent reality of the objective world becomes questionable.

In dream yoga practice, practitioners are instructed to "recognize the dream," that is, to generate the lucid awareness in the dream that "this is only a dream." Once the dream is recognized, the dream "I" is no longer controlled by the dangers, desires, or fears in the dream, and the false appearance of subject-object duality begins to loosen. This loosening is not confined to the dream state; it seeps back into waking consciousness, enabling practitioners to gradually realize that the bardo of this life is also like a great dream. Thus, in the evolution of consciousness, the dream bardo functions as a bridge from coarse waking consciousness to subtle meditative awareness.

C. The Meditation Bardo: The Arising of Meditative States and the Dissolution of the Self

The meditation bardo (bsam gtan bar do) refers to the state of consciousness in which a practitioner abides during meditative absorption. Unlike the dream bardo, the meditation bardo does not occur passively; it is a transformation of consciousness actively brought about through practices such as shamatha (calm abiding) and vipashyana (insight). In shamatha practice, scattered thoughts gradually subside, consciousness withdraws from outward grasping, and rests on its object; in vipashyana practice, the practitioner uses wisdom to observe the nature of mind and penetrates the emptiness of all phenomena.

The basic feature of the meditation bardo is the temporary dissolution of subject-object duality. In deep meditative absorption, coarse conceptual thinking ceases, and the boundary between "I" and "the observed" becomes blurred or even disappears. The practitioner may experience states of non-conceptuality, bliss-emptiness, and luminosity. However, these experiences in themselves do not constitute liberation, because if self-grasping reappears after emerging from meditation, it means that this no-self is only a temporary suppression rather than a thorough eradication. More importantly, if practitioners develop subtle

attachment to the meditative state itself and objectify the experience of bliss-emptiness as "my achievement," they may create an even more hidden construction of self.

Nevertheless, the meditation bardo has irreplaceable soteriological value. It enables practitioners to directly experience that the so-called "self" is not as solid as ordinary experience suggests and can be dissolved under certain conditions; and that consciousness does not exist only in a coarse, distracted state but has subtler, clearer, and more open levels. Such experience provides crucial preparatory training for dealing with the bardo of dying and the bardo of dharmata.

D. The Bardo of Dying: The Dissolution of the Elements and the Collapse of Coarse Consciousness

The bardo of dying ('chi kha'i bar do) is the most critical turning point among the six bardos. It begins at the moment when death is certain and ends just before the luminosity of dharmata arises. From a physiological perspective, the bardo of dying manifests as the successive dissolution of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind: when earth dissolves into water, the body becomes heavy and powerless; when water dissolves into fire, the mouth and nose become dry and bodily fluids are depleted; when fire dissolves into wind, body temperature gradually dissipates; and when wind dissolves into consciousness, breathing ceases. This process is described as the "outer dissolution."

Simultaneously with the dissolution of the four elements, the coarse consciousness collapses. After wind dissolves into consciousness, the "inner dissolution" unfolds: the white essence descends from the crown of the head, the red essence rises from the navel, and the two meet at the heart center; consciousness then passes successively through the stages of "appearance," "increase," and "attainment," finally dissolving into the darkness of "near-attainment." During this process, the six consciousnesses—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mental consciousness—sequentially cease to function, and the coarse dualistic mind gradually disintegrates.

For ordinary beings, the bardo of dying is often accompanied by intense fear and struggle. Because the continuity of the "I" has always depended on the ongoing operation of the coarse body and the six consciousnesses, when these supports collapse one by one, self-grasping manifests in its most naked and intense form. The dying person's denial, anger, despair, and clinging are, from the perspective of Buddhist mind theory, defensive reactions of the "self" facing its own imminent dissolution. Yet it is precisely this complete collapse of supports that offers an extraordinary opportunity to transcend the self: if a practitioner can maintain awareness (rigpa) as coarse consciousness disintegrates, he or she may directly enter the luminosity of dharmata and attain liberation.

E. The Bardo of Dharmata: Intrinsic Luminosity and the Unveiling of No-Self

The bardo of dharmata (chos nyid bar do) begins after the darkness of "near-attainment" in the bardo of dying, at the moment when consciousness dissolves into the fundamental luminosity. At this stage, the intrinsic luminosity of mind—also called the "mother luminosity" or "ground luminosity"—arises nakedly. This is a state of awareness that transcends subject-object duality, conceptual discrimination, and the limitations of time and space; it is the direct manifestation of the emptiness of all phenomena.

The experience of the bardo of dharmata can be understood on two levels. From the ontological level, the intrinsic luminosity is not an external sacred light; it is the revelation of the inseparability of the mind's innate clarity (gsal ba) and emptiness (stong pa). It is inherent in all sentient beings, but is not recognized because it is obscured by the coarse consciousness of daily life. From the phenomenal level, if the deceased fails to recognize this fundamental luminosity, it will manifest as sounds, lights, and rays, and further appear as the peaceful and wrathful deities. These sounds, lights, and deities are not external entities; they are spontaneous manifestations of awareness itself. However, because of habitual self-grasping, untrained persons objectify them as external terrifying or attractive objects, thereby generating fear or attachment and once again obscuring the true face.

The bardo of dharmata is the culmination of the unveiling of no-self. In this state, the coarse self has completely disintegrated, and even subtle self-grasping cannot easily continue because it lacks an object. If practitioners have already recognized awareness—the "child luminosity"—through Dzogchen Trekchö practice during their lifetime, then when the mother luminosity arises, the child and mother luminosities merge like a child leaping into its mother's lap, and in that instant, they can realize the Dharmakaya and attain ultimate liberation. This liberation is not the "self" attaining some kind of achievement; rather, the illusory nature of the "self" is thoroughly seen through, and awareness is no longer obscured by any construction of subjectivity.

F. The Bardo of Becoming: Karmic Winds Arise Again and Subjectivity Re-coalesces

If the deceased does not attain liberation in the bardo of dying or the bardo of dharmata, he or she enters the bardo of becoming (srid pa'i bar do). The bardo of becoming begins after the bardo of dharmata ends and continues until the moment of conception. At this stage, the winds of karma again drive the mind, and consciousness acquires a subtle body—the bardo body. The bardo body has a form similar to that of the previous life and can pass freely through mountains and walls, but is constrained by karma and cannot autonomously choose its destination.

The key feature of the bardo of becoming is the re-coalescence of subjectivity. In the bardo of dharmata, the self was once laid bare, but because the habitual tendencies of ignorance have not been severed, the mind cannot rest in the luminosity of no-self and instead flees from it, seeking again an object to grasp. At this point, the three poisons of attachment, aversion, and ignorance reassert themselves: attachment draws the bardo body toward pleasant scenes, aversion makes it reject terrifying scenes, and ignorance prevents it from knowing that all appearances are projections of its own mind. When the mind sees its future parents in union, it feels attachment to the mother or father and moves toward them, or feels aversion and moves in the opposite direction, ultimately entering the womb and forming a new set of five aggregates.

The bardo of becoming reveals with great clarity that the "self" is not an entity that is destroyed and then resurrected; rather, when the conditions of ignorance, karma, and craving reassemble, subjectivity is constructed once again. Therefore, samsara is not a fixed "I" traveling through the six realms; it is the mind, driven by ignorance, repeatedly undergoing the process of "self-construction—self-dissolution—self-reconstruction." If practitioners can recognize in the bardo of becoming that all phenomena are projections of their own mind, they still have the opportunity to close the womb door and avoid involuntary rebirth.

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III. THE SOTERIOLOGICAL LOGIC OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE SELF: RECOGNITION AND RIGPA

A. Recognition and Rigpa: The Fundamental Key to Dissolving the Self

The six-bardo system is not only a description of states of consciousness; it is also an actionable set of soteriological methods. The core of these methods lies in the direct introduction to "recognition" (ngo shes) and "awareness" (rigpa).

In Dzogchen teachings, mind (sems) and awareness (rigpa) are strictly distinguished. Mind is the totality of dualistic conceptual thought and emotional activity; it always operates within the framework of "cognizer" and "cognized" and is itself the mechanism of self-construction. Awareness, on the other hand, is the nature of mind—a naked, uncontrived, luminous knowing free of subject-object duality. Mind is like waves; awareness is like the ocean. Waves arise and cease without end, but the ocean never departs from its wetness. The key to practice is not to annihilate the mind, nor to replace a coarse state with a subtler one, but to "recognize" its nature in whatever state arises.

"Recognition" here is not conceptual understanding but a direct, unmediated noticing. It is like seeing a long-lost acquaintance and recognizing him instantly without any process of reasoning. When a master introduces the nature of mind, he or she often uses words, symbols, or actions to enable the disciple to glimpse awareness in a single instant. This glimpse itself requires no lengthy reasoning, but it must be continuously stabilized and deepened through subsequent practice.

In the different stages of the six bardos, the object and manner of recognition differ: in the bardo of this life, one recognizes the indivisibility of emptiness and clarity of the mind; in the dream bardo, one recognizes dreams as dreams; in the meditation bardo, one recognizes awareness within meditative states; in the bardo of dying, one recognizes the arising of ground luminosity; in the bardo of dharmata, one recognizes that sounds, lights, and deities are all the self-manifestation of awareness; and in the bardo of becoming, one recognizes the illusory appearances of the bardo and closes the womb door. Although the objects differ, the essence is always the recognition of awareness. Once awareness is recognized, the "self" loses its support, because the self is originally nothing more than a mistaken identification with mental activity. Just as the sky appears when clouds disperse, awareness has always been present; it is merely obscured.

B. Dying and Dharmata: The Crucial Window for Liberation

Among the six bardos, the bardo of dying and the bardo of dharmata are regarded as the most crucial windows for liberation. This is because in these two stages, the operation of the coarse body and the six consciousnesses has collapsed, the physiological and psychological conditions that ordinarily sustain self-grasping have temporarily failed, and the mechanism of self-construction has developed a crack that cannot repair itself.

When the first luminosity of the bardo of dying arises, if a practitioner can rest in the awareness familiarized during life, he or she can attain the liberation of the Dharmakaya in the very instant the luminosity appears. This liberation does not require passing through the lengthy post-death bardos of dharmata and becoming; like a candle being extinguished, subject and object both dissolve, and one merges directly into the dharmadhatu. However, for those who have not trained in awareness during life,

although this luminosity arises just the same, because they lack the capacity to recognize it, it flashes like lightning and cannot be grasped.

If the first luminosity is missed, the bardo of dharmata still offers a second and even a third opportunity for liberation. At this time, the intrinsic luminosity continues to manifest in the form of sounds, lights, and rays, and the peaceful and wrathful deities appear in succession. If a master or fellow practitioner reads from the Bardo Thödol at the ear of the deceased, reminding him or her, "Do not fear, do not cling, all sounds and lights are your own mind," then the deceased may, through such guidance, give rise to recognition and thereby attain liberation. For this reason, Tibetan Buddhism places great emphasis on deathbed assistance and bardo guidance, regarding them as the last opportunity to help the deceased recognize awareness.

The existence of this window profoundly changes how death is understood. Death is no longer the eternal end of consciousness, nor an unknowable dark abyss, but a process in which the coarse levels of consciousness dissolve and intrinsic awareness is revealed nakedly. Here the dissolution of the self is not accomplished through gradual logical reasoning but is realized instantaneously at a critical threshold. This is the fundamental difference between six-bardo practice and ordinary philosophical speculation: it is not content to argue for no-self but seeks to directly realize no-self amid the most intense upheaval of death.

C. Daily Bardo Training: From Conceptual No-Self to Direct Realization

An important feature of six-bardo practice is that the process of dying is not a break with everyday experience but a natural continuation of everyday states of consciousness. Therefore, mastery of the death bardos must be built on the practices of the bardo of this life, the dream bardo, and the meditation bardo.

The practice of the bardo of this life emphasizes contemplating impermanence and the dreamlike nature of all phenomena. Practitioners repeatedly reflect that death may come at any time, thereby weakening attachment to the sense of security in this life; and by observing that all phenomena arise from causes and conditions and lack inherent existence, they weaken attachment to the reality of external objects. Although such contemplation belongs to the conceptual level, it lays the foundation for deeper direct realization.

The practice of the dream bardo is primarily dream yoga. Practitioners repeatedly remind themselves during the day that "everything is like a dream," and carry this recognition into sleep, gradually cultivating the ability to recognize dreams within the dream state. Once one can maintain awareness in dreams, one can freely transform the dream, face fear without being moved. This training corresponds directly to post-death bardo experience: if one can recognize dreams as dreams, the likelihood of recognizing bardo illusions increases greatly.

The practice of the meditation bardo centers on the union of shamatha and vipashyana. Through shamatha, consciousness is withdrawn from distraction and gains stability and clarity; through vipashyana, practitioners penetrate the emptiness of the nature of mind and give rise to the wisdom of no-self. In deep meditative absorption, practitioners can simulate the process of consciousness dissolution at death and familiarize themselves in advance with the state of awareness after coarse conceptual thinking has subsided.

Furthermore, the distinctive Dzogchen practices of Trekchö (cutting through) and Tögal (leaping over) take awareness itself as the path. Trekchö requires practitioners to remain undistracted and uncontrived at all times and in all places, resting in intrinsic awareness; Tögal, through visionary practices of luminosity, familiarizes practitioners with the world of sounds and lights that manifests in the bardo of dharmata. Through such daily training, no-self ceases to be merely a philosophical proposition and becomes an experience that can be directly verified at every level of consciousness.

IV. THE "INTERMEDIATENESS" OF THE SIX BARDOS IN DIALOGUE WITH MODERN PHILOSOPHY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A. "Intermediateness" and Existential Being-toward-Death

One of the most central features of the six-bardo philosophy is that it understands life as a continuum of "intermediate states" rather than as the movement of an entity from a fixed starting point to a fixed endpoint. This "intermediate nature" forms a meaningful dialogue with Heidegger's analysis of Dasein in Being and Time.

Heidegger points out that the mode of being of Dasein is "being-toward-death." Death is not an event that occurs at the end of Dasein's life; it is a possibility that Dasein always faces from birth onward. The fact that death cannot be objectified and cannot be taken over by anyone else forces Dasein to withdraw from everyday fallenness and confront the groundlessness of its own existence. In anxiety (Angst), the entire web of meanings in the surrounding world collapses, and Dasein finds itself thrown into homelessness. This groundlessness is precisely the precondition for Dasein's authenticity.

The six-bardo system likewise takes death as the fundamental question of consciousness, but it offers a more concrete phenomenology of death than Heidegger's existential analysis. In the six bardos, death is not a punctual, non-objectifiable event, but a dynamic process that can be analyzed into the stages of dying, dharmata, and becoming. Dasein's groundlessness is experienced in the luminosity of the bardo of dharmata as the most thorough state of nakedness; while in the bardo of becoming, the unresolved karmic forces are analogous to the existential dynamics of Dasein's fallenness. Thus, the six bardos can be seen as an "expanded being-toward-death": they not only reveal the impact of death on the everyday self but further map the concrete trajectory of the dissolution and re-coalescence of the self within that impact.

B. The Illusoriness of Subjectivity and Psychological Defense Mechanisms

From the perspective of modern philosophy of consciousness and psychology, the six bardos' dissolution of the "self" has profound implications for the critique of subjectivity. Sartre holds that the ego is not an original content of consciousness but a transcendent object constructed by consciousness through reflective acts. The fundamental characteristic of consciousness is "nihilation"; it continually transcends itself and negates being-in-itself. Thus, human freedom precedes essence, and the self has no fixed substantial basis. However, Sartre still retains a pole of consciousness as "for-itself," whereas Buddhist Dzogchen goes further and points out that this very pole of consciousness is also empty.

At the psychological level, the "ego" described by Freud, as the executor of the reality principle, must constantly employ defense mechanisms—repression, denial, rationalization, projection—to maintain its own stability and integrity. When these defense mechanisms encounter extreme situations, "ego-disintegration anxiety" arises. The dissolution of the four elements and the

collapse of consciousness in the bardo of dying can be seen as an extreme situation of ego disintegration: the coarse body no longer supports the sense of self, the meaning-structure of the everyday world collapses, and the ego's defense mechanisms fail one by one. The fear, anger, and despair that arise at this point are, from a Buddhist perspective, the final struggle of self-grasping.

The value of six-bardo practice lies in the fact that it does not oppose disintegration anxiety by strengthening the ego; rather, it dissolves such anxiety by familiarizing oneself in advance with the state of no-self. Through daily training in dream and meditation, practitioners repeatedly experience the loosening and dissolution of subject-object duality, so that the self no longer regards disintegration as the greatest threat. When the bardo of dying arrives, this long-term training is transformed into confidence in and rest in awareness, rather than fear of disappearance. This offers a non-pathologizing framework for contemporary understanding of psychological defense mechanisms and the experience of "self-fragmentation" in trauma healing.

C. A Resource for Constructing Contemporary Thanatology

The heavy medicalization and sequestration of death in modern society have made death the most unfamiliar and unspeakable event in life. People usually have no opportunity to confront death directly and lack a language for integrating death into the overall meaning of life. The five stages of dying proposed by Kübler-Ross—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance—although revealing the psychological reaction patterns of the dying, still essentially regard death as an endpoint to be passively endured.

The six-bardo system provides a completely different paradigm for contemporary thanatology. It redefines death as the most crucial transition in the evolution of consciousness during life, rather than the absolute end of existence. In this paradigm, death is not the void of meaning but may become the very occasion for the genuine disclosure of meaning. The dying person is no longer a helpless, isolated waiter but a subject who can actively participate in the transformation of his or her own consciousness; family members and deathbed companions are no longer mere bystanders but people who can provide effective guidance at critical moments.

Moreover, the six-bardo system's layered description of consciousness states—coarse waking consciousness, subtle dream consciousness, meditative absorption, death dissolution, dharmata luminosity, and the bardo of becoming—offers potential space for dialogue with contemporary consciousness research on waking, sleep, dreaming, coma, and near-death experiences. Of course, such dialogue must fully respect the epistemological differences between the two sides: the six-bardo system is grounded in Buddhist soteriology and contemplative experience and cannot be simply reduced to an object of neuroscience or psychology. Yet it is precisely this difference that may provide contemporary philosophy of consciousness with a non-reductive, first-person contemplative model of consciousness.

V. CONCLUSION

The six-bardo system, with an extremely precise map of birth and death, deconstructs the entire process of human life—from coarse waking to subtle luminosity, from self-construction to self-dissolution, and from the unveiling of no-self to the re-coalescence of subjectivity—into a series of dynamic transitional states. Within this framework, the "self" is no longer an entity

running through the whole process, but a false identity repeatedly constructed by the mind under the impetus of ignorance and karma. The six bardos of this life, dream, meditation, dying, dharmata, and becoming not only describe the full cycle of consciousness from coarse to subtle, from subtle to subtlest, and from subtlest back to re-coalescence, but also reveal that at every transition point there exists the possibility of recognizing awareness and breaking through self-grasping.

From the perspective of the Buddhist ontology of no-self and emptiness, the true significance of the six bardos lies not in providing a set of technical procedures concerning death, but in using the extreme situation of death to force consciousness to confront its own deepest groundlessness. It is precisely within this groundlessness that awareness is revealed nakedly and no-self is directly realized. In this sense, the six bardos are not merely a set of religious doctrines but a profound philosophy of consciousness, subjectivity, and existence. They offer modern philosophy a resource for rethinking the relationship between death, self, and consciousness—one that is rooted in a millennia-old contemplative tradition and at the same time possesses great potential for contemporary dialogue.

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