

inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests.

"Only such a sensation and such a cognizance can now destroy the egoism completely crystallized in them that has swallowed up the whole of their Essence and also that tendency to hate others which flows from it — the tendency, namely, which engenders all those mutual relationships existing there, which serve as the chief cause of all their abnormalities unbecoming to three-brained beings and maleficent for them themselves and for the whole of the Universe."

RE-BIRTH WITHOUT FEAR

(*The Psychedelic Experience* by Timothy Leary,
Ralph Metzner & Richard Alpert)
Gerald Heard

NO PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING MANUAL is more needed today than *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead*,¹ by Doctors Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert. For here, in present-day psycho-therapeutic terms, we are provided with a method which can give us essential aid and guidance in and for the most vital and most neglected phase of our lives. The text is, of course, a rendition of the Mahayana Buddhist *Bardo Thödol*. This is the Tibetan "office for the departing," "the last rites" performed to instruct and prepare the person who is leaving this physical body and this phenomenal three-dimensional world for the next, out-of-the-body experience. It gives the instructions whereby the lama informs and guides the dying person into the "intermediate" or "threshold" (that is, "Bardo") state that awaits the newly released soul as it reassembles itself after disengagement from the physique. But however necessary it is that our American and, indeed, all our "modernized" societies be taught how to get over our death phobia and so to be freed from the ridiculous tabu-dishonesties whereby we attempt to disguise our rightful exit, we shall not try out this method and undergo this training unless we can be reassured on two points, unless two quite sensible questions can be answered, two rational objections be met.

The first is: "How can a Westerner accept the Buddhist, ori-

¹New Hyde Park, N. Y.: University Books, 1964. \$5 (Psychedelic Monograph I.)

ental, pessimistic, pre-modern, pre-scientific view of life: namely, that the best thing to do with it is to get out of it!"

Of course, there is no logical reason why a method should not be accurate and useful even though it may have been used for improper purposes. A skeleton key, even though a burglar may use it to enter your house, is more often used by a locksmith. For example, he employs the very same instrument to let you in when you have locked yourself out.

Sooner or later everyone comes to die. We in the West have no psychiatry nor psychophysical therapy for dealing with this important event, and the inherited religious methods seem increasingly to be inapposite. For they were made to fit an earlier and disproved view of Nature, Life and Man. Of necessity, such a mistaken view of Reality cannot fail to deduce mistaken and misguided rules of conduct in regard to man's destiny, behavior, obligations and initiative. So an increasing number of responsible people find they cannot accept or believe such rulings and ritual. Some still try to do so but find, because of these general doubts, that, though they conform because of their need for emotional support, their conviction is not strong enough. The lack of any system that might both win their intelligent conviction and also strengthen their wills makes their compliance ineffectually wavering.

The second question runs: "Granted, that out of the psychological methods developed by Buddhism a valid terminal therapy could be extracted, what use could that therapy be to any but the old?" The vast majority of people now have their lives still before them, and they feel their obligation is to serve the Human Race and help forward its future. All the more do they feel this because they realize that the dedication of those who will so serve could prove decisive, and for two reasons: In the first place, desertion by a few in the present desperate pass could precipitate disaster; in the second place, we now know that there is in Life a vast purpose that we can fulfill. Conversely, we have historic evidence that when the intelligent and concerned, in order to save their souls, deserted the human venture and humanity's hope, then this failure of nerve has proved fatal to civilization.

Does not the Buddhist conviction, that life is evil and man's only comfort is in rejecting it, permeate and orientate its whole teaching? If this process for release at the completion of life were not hopelessly pessimistic, would not this method of completion, this rite of departure be the last and crowning aid in a series of preliminary enlarging releases? In fact it would and should be the fourth act of a fourfold series of psychiatric performances. For life

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is a cycle of entry (Birth), growth (to maturity), involution, de-involvement (Old Age), and elimination and exit (Death).

This undoubtedly is true. But when we actually study the basic structure of Buddhist thought, we see that the system is not confined to a terminal therapy. The centuries-old religious theory and practice, which we collect (but do not order) under the label "Buddhism," conceive of life as this Fourfold process. The Life Process was rightly recognized as marked by four great turns, four pivotal twists.

Because they are each of them a detaching process, a disengaging act, Buddhist classifiers called all of them "Dukkas," which means "dislocations."

Further, because at each of these attempts at detachment the organism might easily get caught and bound, these four Dukkas are called *Fetters*.

Unfortunately, Buddhism, during its scholastic-schematic epoch, concentrated on pain as the dominant reality of Life. For this epoch tallied with that phase of acuity, of hyper-sensitive negative and personal-bodily-confined feeling (and so of life-rejection) which I have called the great Ascetic epoch, the epoch of the self-absorbed stage of man's intensifying self-consciousness.² The dominant conviction was not only that pain was the supreme experience in the physical life, and always exceeded pleasure. But even worse than this: these ascetic scholastics built a system (not based on any actual demonstrable evidence) which was said to prove that pleasure was the cause of pain, that any pleasure would and must be paid for by pain, so the only way to stop the unbearable and futile pain was to stop all pleasure, to cut off all physical sensation.

The painful effort, the 'agōn'³ of disengagement, so obsessed these monks that they disregarded the fact that it has a purpose. The dislocation, the disengagement, is *from* a condition that up to that point was necessary for growth. Then, if there is to be further growth, at that point the growing organism must free itself for a more stimulating experience. It must loosen its purchase on the now-too-small location and so, able to reach out, must relocate itself for a freer life in a larger frame of reference.

Hence in standard orthodox Theravada Buddhism the four stages of life are named negatively. They are all Dukkas, all disloca-

²See *The Five Ages of Man: The Psychology of Human History*, by Gerald Heard. N. Y.: Julian Press, 1963.

³The Greeks had two words for pain: *patheia*, pain that has become degenerative (sickness); and *agonia*, literally a wrestling match: pain which is used to attain to, and is transmuted into, a heightened consciousness.

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tions. The fact that they lead to larger relocations is dismissed as being no more than a new and larger opportunity for suffering. We are told that the first stage, Birth, is a Dukka. And, indeed, giving birth (for a self-conscious, psychophysically uninstructed woman in a pain-conscious society) is a traumatic dislocation.⁴ But then at the second, third and fourth big turns of the Life curve we are *not* told, as we might expect, that weaning and childhood, adolescence and attaining maturity are Dukkas.⁵ Maybe the monk felt that all self-conscious life up to the end of first maturity was a seducing bait, a further acquiring of a deepening addiction, enticement into that pleasure which (because life was evil) must, according to their suffering-scarred minds, be paid for in pain.

The second Dukka is, we are told, *sickness*. This we see is *not* a dislocation, it is a degeneration. It is *not* one of those successive phases of growth wherein the preceding location, having yielded that purchase, growth-stimulant and area of response (which at that stage the growing person *did* then require), must now be disengaged from, in order that the developing person may re-engage with a higher and wider frame of reference. In the Buddhist canon, however, after that wrongly specified, mistakenly named number two of the four Dukkas, the teaching does return to the Biological curve with Old Age, the beginning of that curve's decline.

Certainly, in passing, we should note that there is enough evidence that growing up is not less exacting than growing down. Development in and of the body during that period needs just as much understanding-training as is needed to make the more publicized tasks, problems and difficulties of old age an undefeating and a worthwhile accomplishment. Indeed, in becoming adult and completing First Maturity (to 45), the individual probably goes through more locating and dislocating than during the rest of his life. For, after the secure location of mother-embracing intimacy comes the dislocation of weaning. After weaning comes small-childhood — whose dreams must be abandoned while rough discipline enforces an unexplained obedience. With adolescence comes a tide of new inner forces either unexplained or misexplained, but always forbidden any honest and full investigation, exploration and experi-

⁴We know now, from microscopic study of the milk teeth of infants and children, that in a severe parturition the infant suffers too. For in the fine growth rings of the child's teeth (which, from the first tooth formation, are laid down about every 36 days), all its illnesses are recorded and show up in a distorted ring. Among these disease-distorted rings, none is so ill-made as that which marks the trauma of birth.

⁵See the writer's *The Five Ages of Man*.

mentation. And lastly, after adolescence there has to be faced the entry into adulthood wherein dutiful conformity and responsible cooperation are required of the new subject, citizen or comrade who is not permitted to choose his loyalty or to question the irrational assumptions of whatever state holds possession of his body.⁶

But about our mishandling of the Third Dukka of Old Age—the disengagement from the physical growth process when, First Maturity being over, the racial and biological process is ended—there can be no doubt. Here, in the way we handle (or rather fail to handle) old age, we must recognize that the Buddhist canon was right. As we know from our own mounting “casualties of unhappiness,” the post-reproductive phase of our lives is marred not only by the geriatric diseases, the specific complaints of physical decline and the degenerative failures of function and organ, but also with involuntional melancholy. For the unprepared, uninstructed, untrained, we may be fairly certain that involuntary Old Age will prove for the elders distressing, an inability to understand dislocation, an incompetence to practice release. Yet in this Dukka the Buddhist therapies had much to offer. When we reach the fourth and final disengagement of Death, the casting off of the body, here we know that Buddhism, because of its exclusive concern with escape from this life, did devote nearly all of its highly skilled and efficacious attention.

But now let us see how the series looks if we regard it in the light of our present biological and psychological knowledge. First, we can accurately name these four life-stages as (1) Voluntary Birth, (2) voluntary conscious Biological-Physiological Growth, (3) intelligent, informed and purposed Psychological-embryonic Growth (in the womb of the body), and then (4) intentional, informed, Psychological Birth out of the body. All these engagements and disengagements are strenuous and need skilled instruction. They are effortful ‘agōns,’ but if handled as such, they are not pathological and need not be debilitating if we train and prepare for them.

Secondly, as soon as we have thus scaled and evaluated this fourfold structure of life, we see that these four steps divide very clearly into two pairs. The first pair belong to the life of the race. These two are the biological phase in which we perform and fulfill our role as reproducers, *epigenetic*⁷ carriers-on (at least potentially) of a consciously, purposively, rapidly self-evolving species. After ful-

⁶*ibid.*

⁷Epigenesis is a more accurate word than is evolution. For it describes what has actually happened in evolution—the emergence of types that have risen above the early rudimentary types, rising from the single cell and in man to self-conscious, self-directing evolutionary advance.

filling that phase (instead of being, as we would be if we were only a particular animal species, “too old at 40”), we are ready for our specific, unique, psychological phase. We can then go through the second pair of purely human stages: (1) voluntary involution, disengagement from the biological concern, dislocation from this three-dimensional, space-time, entropic process in which the race develops; and (2) when that involuntional disengagement is done, we are then free-movers and can and should achieve voluntary discarding of the husk-body in which we have ripened.

So we emerge into the Fourth Dimension outside space-time and are free to exist liberated, disengaged from the entropic down-pull which can only act on the appetitive, possessive physical body and has no purchase on the psyche. All wild animals (because they belong to their race, and their consciousness is not separate but that of their species’ field) must die when their use in, and purpose for, the race is over (in the *Hominidae Genera*, at 45); for they are not self-conscious. And so being conscious of, and run by, only the racial clock time, they therefore are identified with their reproductive body. When it is finished they fall naturally into coma and die, while the species life is carried on by the young they have bred and reared and which are the complete fulfillment of the physiological, instrumental constituents which thus discharged themselves.

But is there any evidence of all this? There surely is, right through the four stages. To start then with the first pair of turning points that rule the human biological process. As to Birth we have now learned to achieve “childbirth without fear.”⁸ We have discovered that the prospective mother can be taught to welcome the parturition with her entire psychosome. She can learn to join up her surface, personal, forebrain-mind with the race mind in her mid-brain. So without fear the process is transformed—because, for the pathological experience of the animal-victim, which feels itself being sacrificed in torture, is now substituted the rightful ‘agōn.’ For instead of a helpless prisoner on the rack, we now have a magnificently braced and alert contestant. ‘Agōn’ means the wrestling match. And this is a good name for the wrestle in which the instructed and heroic-minded mother with magnificent effort delivers her child, sends him out, disengages him from her now imprisoning womb and re-engages him into her arms and to her breast.

Indeed ‘agōn,’ though a fine term full of initiative, is still too narrow because too competitive. Dance—the utmost athletic dance (the superb expressive mastery of the ultra-acrobatic ballet premiere

⁸See *Childbirth Without Fear: The Principles and Practice of Natural Childbirth*, by Grantly Dick Read. N. Y.: Harper, 2nd rev. ed., 1959.

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dance as she demonstrates, in utmost rhythm with the splendid and miraculous competence of harmonious, ultra-expressive dilation, the spirit which the trained, informed and inspired body can reveal and express) — dance, the Sanskrit symbol of the very world's creation, is the only term in which can be rightly phrased the miracle of a birth achieved by a mother wholly in time and rhythm with the rhythms and tempi of her body.

And this, the starting step of the voluntary acceptance of the biological advance, is naturally followed by the second of these two steps. This second step embraces all the other 'agōns' of psychophysical growth into maturity: that is, weaning and childhood, puberty and adolescence and first maturity. And throughout life from birth to death, sickness — the pathological relapse — is *not* included. Instead we are offered and can have a sequence of 'agōns' of ever more daring dilations. These are in those ordeals⁹ of heightening resistance, of intensifying, conscious, voluntary, strenuous health, of more alert, self-detached awareness by a constant psychosomatic education of the entire mind-body.

Now we have ample evidence that this, the first two-step phase of the human being, is well mapped for him and actually wrought into him. Indeed, he will be prodded by penalization if he won't obey. For from birth to 45 we today fulfill the biological racial life of our species. We now know¹⁰ that man belongs to a genus (or to genera), the large-brained, upright *Hominidae*, and that the life term of these creatures is some 45 years. That is, at 45 years they have reached the end of their reproductive cycle and so the end of their use and purpose for the advance of their species. *Homo erectus* was, we know, a creature of great competence, well adjusted to use an understanding that made it the ablest of animals and perfectly competent to grasp and fulfill the racial plan implanted in it. But its still unfinished brain kept it from the consciousness of its separate selfhood.

That species (*Homo erectus*) appears about a million years ago. After half that time (circa 500,000 years ago) appears *Homo sapiens*, a creature with a reflective mind, aware of time and of separation. Hence follow inevitably agriculture, the solar calendar and an awareness of death.¹¹

⁹'Ordeal' only means setting resources in order, so that with these free assets we may and can achieve a larger life, a fuller, conscious re-engagement of a wider frame of reference.

¹⁰See Carleton S. Coon, *The Origin of Races*. N. Y.: Knopf, 1962.

¹¹We have actual evidence of rites that indicate the speculations about and the conviction of persistence after death — for example, the child burials with their shell coronals in the Neanderthal graves in the Carmel caves.

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Man now enters on a new extension of life and so must take the second pair of *specifically* human steps, old age and death. The new extension raises his expectation of life from 45 to 75.¹² This extension of another 30 years in which he is free to become specifically human, free from the racial responsibility and the advance of the genetic process, is, we then see, what we should expect if this upper process is intended and can and must be man's conscious and intentional advance into the two specific human freedoms: voluntary old age is for disengagement and for preparation for voluntary death, when we can competently discard and eliminate the diminished and loosened husk. That achieved, we naturally are emerged from this Third Dimension into that Fourth which we now know is the next frequency above this the Third. It is this new non-physiological frame of reference that now awaits us. It is as natural as was the life out in this world that awaited us when we left our mother's womb. In brief we were 9 months in that first womb, and now we are given 900 months (75 years) in this psychologically embryonic condition, the womb of the body.

In this frame of reference we are provided with the outline of a comprehensive chart for the entire life cycle. In this frame of Life-acceptance, we see how the Four Disengagements, Dislocations and larger Relocations are to be achieved: Firstly, wholly voluntary childbirth, not merely without fear but with strenuous psychophysical ecstasy.¹³ Secondly, wholly voluntary, strenuous acquisition of conscious, intentional heightening of health of awareness by skilled ordeal. Thirdly, wholly voluntary and intentional discarding of the biological concerns and obligations which have been discharged. And finally, fourthly, the voluntary emergence into the new birth.

We may find the instruction, as to how this is actually done, by our present study and practice of the method whereby today the pregnant mother, her full time come, brings about her delivery. The present birth-training teaches the woman to get into touch with her mid-brain and join with its intention. So she cooperates consciously with the subconscious racial effort. The same process of instructed, skilled, trained cooperation of the self-conscious fore-brain with the deep mid-brain permits that same union of the mind-that-controls-the-body with the intentionally conscious person. So the birth into the Fourth-Dimensional life becomes as purposive

¹²See Gavin De Beer, *Embryos and Ancestors*. N. Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 3rd ed., 1958.

¹³These are the statements of ever larger numbers of mothers who are trained in this re-naturalized childbirth.

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and sure as is the present intentional parturitional behavior of the mother who practices "childbirth without fear."

Into this frame of reference we can fit, as a culminant procedure and in terms of total life-acceptance, this skilled modernization of the *Bardo Thödol*. Here in THE PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE is the crowning efficacious rite whereby, after the physical, racial, three-dimensional life has been fulfilled, we go on to that specific psychological growth which raises us to the goal that alone makes sense of Life, that brings us those powers and freedoms, to attain which we took a human body and lived the strenuous preparatory 75 years as an embryonic psyche.

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