

## **Life between Lives**

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Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian philosopher, social reformer, architect, and occultist, felt that a human soul, or spirit, which has inhabited an earthly body and imbued it with a residue of spiritual forces will return to the spiritual atmosphere and enliven it. He talked about human experiences becoming nourishment for the cosmos. He also felt that while we are on earth we prepare for the spiritual world – and then, again, in the spiritual world we prepare for life on earth. Life is a continuum.

In one of his lectures he said: ‘After death we see, in looking back, what we have done wrong, and say to ourselves: “I have deteriorated as a soul”. Then the intention is formed to make good in the next earth life what has been done wrong, in order to regain the standard of spiritual perfection a man should have.’

He taught that on passing into and through the experience we call death, our consciousness is gradually and *vastly expanded*, so that we feel a sense of oneness of consciousness with all things. And then, as we approach the new earth life, that consciousness begins to contract as we enter the new body.

Nowadays some psychiatrists – in particular Dr. Whitton of Toronto – have found that under hypnosis, or past-life regression, clients explore more than just their previous earth lives. They seem to explore the state of *life between lives*. And some, like Michael Newton, have developed a therapy which concentrates on using this spiritual dimension of life between lives.

If we can accept the concept of reincarnation, then there must be a time when our soul actually finds itself between lives.

Michael Newton postulates four states of consciousness:

- a. ‘The Beta state is a fully awake conscious state.
- b. Alpha states involve
  - 1) a light stage which we typically use for meditation;
  - 2) a medium state which is associated for recovering childhood memories and past trauma; and
  - 3) a deeper Alpha state which is used for past life recovery.
- c. The Theta state is the deepest we can go into before losing consciousness, and it is this state that uncovers the area of the superconscious mind that reveals spiritual life-between-lives activity.
- d. The Delta state is our final deep sleep state.’

During this life-between-lives therapy it is usual to regress the client back to their mother’s womb and then straight back into their most recent previous life. This is so that they can experience their death scene naturally before they enter the spiritual world.

They are helped to do this by the therapist asking them relevant questions e.g. ‘where are you now in relation to your body?’ ‘What is happening?’ ‘What are you feeling’ etc.

‘When taken through the death experience of one of their previous lives, clients seem to experience the same things which we see reported in the literature on near-death experiences – separation from the body, witnessing activities around the body and in neighbouring vicinities, the tunnel, the encounter with the white light, life review,’ etc.

But whereas those who have near-death experiences are instructed to return to complete their current life, Michael Newton’s clients continue on to explore what comes next in the *bardo*, as this dimension is called in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (written approx 12 centuries ago).

Michael Newton calls this state of consciousness between lives ‘metaconsciousness’.

This is the state that Rudolf Steiner was aware of – the expanded consciousness.

It seems to be a heightened state of awareness.

It seems to be beyond time – as we know it.

It seems that everything is happening all at once – a sort of holographic panorama.

It seems to carry a feeling of being more ‘real’ than earthly existence.

And, repeatedly, it has been recognised as our true home.

Like peak experiences... it can be a glimpse into eternity.

Quotes from people who have experienced it include: “You’ve woken me up in an unreal world... Now I know where the true reality lies.”...

“It’s so bright, so beautiful, so serene. It’s like going into the sun and being absorbed without any sensation of heat. You go back to the wholeness of everything. I didn’t want to come back.”

Even these expressions do not convey the richness, intensity and beauty of the bardo – those who express them always say they cannot do justice to the reality experienced.

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* states: ‘one’s environment in the disembodied state is largely a reflection of each person’s thought-forms and expectations.’ It would seem, therefore, that it is important that we die in a state of peace; Catholics have the sacrament of Extreme Unction, also designed to bring peace to a dying person.

‘The identity one assumes in the bardo appears to be that of the Oversoul with the most recent life emphasized’. (The Oversoul is the larger consciousness that incorporates and integrates all the experiences gathered in our many incarnations. See *Lifecycles* by Christopher Bache for further consideration on this aspect.)

While it is accepted that this state of being in life between lives is a state of being in the now – timeless - it seems that the length of earth time one spends there varies widely. The shortest Whitton encountered was 10 months (in earth time) the longest about 800 years. He says ‘the average is about 40 years, though this appears to have been getting shorter over the past three centuries.’ (This research has been borne out by other researchers, in particular Helen Wambach.) People spend this time doing different things. At one extreme are those who are unambitious or indifferent to their spiritual development. They spend most of it resting, perhaps because they have had an arduous, difficult or traumatic life and they need a period of solitude and healing before they move

on to a sort of orientation process. At the other extreme are those souls who are deeply committed to their evolutionary progress, who spend their time in study of various kinds, preparing for their next life. Mainly, it has been found that this period does include much help, particularly from one's own guide.

Also, it seems as though one meets with one's nearest and dearest. People may well ask 'what about contact with a relative after death – if they have re-incarnated?' Michael Newton has found that, on average, we need about 80% of our own spiritual energy to re-incarnate, but may therefore leave about 20% of our essence, so to speak, behind in the spiritual world, which may be still contactable by mediums etc. This sounds like a very strange concept at first but there is a more comprehensive account of this theory in Michael Newton's book (details below), and also a lot about energy and light in the spiritual world.

'It has been said that we are able to tap into our entire spiritual energy during times of stress through prayer or meditation.'

It seems that here, in this state of consciousness between lives, one is brought before a sort of panel of judgement, where the soul confronts the truth of the life just lived. Many people who have reported back on this – when under hypnosis or similar therapy – have found themselves before a *'group of wise, elderly, archetypal beings whose job was to assist them in learning lessons from their current life and planning their next incarnation. These beings sometimes take the form of figures from the individual's religious heritage, (such as Christ or Buddha, or Mohammed,) but others see them as wise and loving beings.'* Michael Newton calls them 'elders'. Other people are just aware of a loving but judging presence.

We see *everything* that has happened in our lives.

And we may not like the new life that is recommended to us – but from the heightened perspective we would recognise its value as a learning device. We may see that we have to return to a life surrounded by old enemies, or suffer great trials – but it is all selected to create the conditions for growth. And (according to Whitton) each of us sees what we are getting into before we are reborn.

We, just possibly, might understand a little more about situations in the world where people are starving/persecuted/ ill-treated/ if, before incarnation, it is something they have recognised as a growth area? Or rich/happy/fulfilled etc.? For example, one client said: "There are people I didn't treat too well in my last life, and I have to go back to the Earth plane again and work off the debt. This time, if they hurt me in return, I'm going to forgive them because all I really want to do is to go back home."

Suffering or hardship does not mean punishment. It can be that as a soul nears the completion of its journeys it elects to experience more difficulties in order to speed up the completion of its course of study. And it is said that these *karmic scripts* are developed in consultation with other souls who will take part in them. The choice of one's parents is critical in establishing the themes of one's life – and the timing and place of each birth is vitally important.

All knowledge exists beyond this plane – and outcomes that seem unclear now, are seen as present knowledge in the bardo, or metaconsciousness or state between lives. We may recall St. Paul's often-quoted statement: *'Now I see as in a glass darkly, but then I shall see face-to-face'*

There are many incidences quoted in *Lifecycles* by Christopher Bache – which show how people have come to understand just why certain patterns repeat in their lives – or why they appeared to choose to experience certain events – some very traumatic. And, it may be that the Oversoul, which can see over the whole pattern of our lives, is what guides us to make the choices that we do. 'For those who are deeply committed to their own evolutionary progress, it is possible to accomplish many lifetimes of work in a single life-cycle... Those who have experienced the planning of their lives in the bardo all return with the same insistent message for us: We are solely responsible for who we are and for the circumstances in which we find ourselves at every point in our lives... No matter how difficult or seemingly inexplicable our lives may be, everything in them is there for our own benefit.'

Michael Newton says: 'Life between Lives therapy is actually a spiritual quest for better self-understanding.' And people sometimes 'have deep experiences of the meaningfulness of the flow of existence, a meaningfulness that fills them with wonder and lifts their vision beyond the horizon of their individual sagas.'

One person said: *'I have been allowed the barest glimpse of levels of creation that are far above anything I can even begin to put into words. I was made to feel that everything we do has meaning at the highest level. Our sufferings are not random: they are merely part of an eternal plan more complex and awe-inspiring than we are capable of imagining.'*

Interestingly, we also have a Quaker slant on this: the Quaker, Richard Hubberthorne, was reported as saying, on his deathbed in Newgate prison, "...out of this straitness I must go, for I am wound into largeness..." Was he already experiencing the expansion of consciousness?

#### **References**

Christopher Bache: *Lifecycles*

Rudolf Steiner: *Aspects of His Spiritual Worldview*

Michael Newton: *Life Between Lives*

Lucy Screechfield McIver: *A Song of Death, Our Spiritual Birth: A Quaker way of Dying* (Pendle Hill pamphlet No. 340)