

# The Tibetan Book of the Dead

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I'm fascinated by the idea that psychological and physical space are essentially the same. When I read on page one of the Tibetan Book of the Dead that it is "a book of space" I became intrigued by how this book might help me develop that idea.

On page 1, we learn that "Bardo means gap; ...It is like not being sure of our ground" and on page 2 that "The details presented in this book are very much what happens in our daily living situation."

If there are gaps then there are non gaps. The non gaps possess a sense of groundedness. Life is not a process of *getting* grounded, but a process of navigating the gaps between grounds.

In a [prior paper](#) I proposed an archetype for belief systems, which I called the "world of belief archetype." I think that a world of belief is similar to the non gap place of feeling grounded and the transition from one world of belief to another is the journey through the bardo.

As we leave one world of belief and transition to another, we are in a bardo state where we are not sure of our ground. For instance, we all had a world of belief prior to coming to Pacifica and we are in the process of moving to another world of belief. We felt grounded before coming and will feel grounded again, but in the interval we are not sure of our ground. We are in a bardo.

What are those gaps like? Are they totally empty or is there something in them? Emptiness is a ubiquitous term in Buddhism and I wonder about its relationship to chaos. What else could emptiness be but chaos? If something is not chaotic, can't we define it and then wouldn't it be non empty?

The bardo seems very similar to what Campbell, in *Flight of the Wild Gander*, calls the state "between two thoughts." What is a thought but an expression of a belief system? If the bardo is the state of being between two thoughts, then it may be a goal in itself. Perhaps it's the gap itself that is grounding, not the non gaps.

The bardo states are also linked with realms, which seem to be worlds of belief. Couldn't we say that the realm of hell is based on a belief in aggression, the realm of humans is a world in which we believe in the efficacy of pride and so on? And what's it like between the appearances of the tathagatas, who come each day. Then you're in the bardo between the bad worlds of belief. The bardo in the bardo.

Now we have good worlds of belief, those non gaps where we feel grounded, bad worlds of belief, the realms in the bardo, and the bardos between the realms in the bardo.

Don't the bad worlds of belief give a sense of being grounded as well? Many people *do* feel grounded when they feel proud or even when angry. Perhaps some realms don't offer as much ground as others and that brings me the concept of density.

We frequently talk about "solid" ground in the physical world, which is related to the density of the material on which we are standing. What is psychological density?

Density is related to coherence. If you throw a bunch of stuff into a jar to fill it up everything is pointed every which way. If you shake that jar, the items start moving toward a common orientation, settle down closer and you get more room in the jar.

Back to Pacifica. When we first came, a lot of ideas got thrown into the jars of our minds. We've been "shaking up" that jar both here and in our other worlds, which makes those ideas more coherent, denser and gives room for new ideas. As a result, we feel more grounded in the Pacifica World of Belief.

There's a lot of empty space in that original jar, a lot of bardo. As the jar gets denser, the gaps seem to disappear. But not really. Modern physics teaches us that atoms are all mainly space, so no matter how dense something seems and how grounded it makes us feel, it's still at least 99% bardo.