

were two of the personality types that distinguished the two groups. Given the fact that the United States is basically populated with immigrants (the 2000 Census found 10.4% of the population to be foreign-born) and their descendents, it would seem reasonable to assume that among the developed nations, the United States has a disproportionate share of thrill- or sensation-seeking personality types, as psychologist Frank Farley claims.

Countering such risk-taking appetites has been the trend in modern countries to eradicate risk, such as through seatbelt regulations, Pure Food and Drug Act, bankruptcy laws, and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Warning labels abound, with laws requiring their placement on five-gallon buckets (so children will not fall in them and drown) and step-ladders (30% the price of which goes to cover potential liabilities). On the packaging of one brand of electric iron appeared "Do not iron clothes on body"; on a child's Superman costume: "Wearing of this garment does not enable you to fly."

Out of this sanitized and risk-free cultural setting emerged during the end of the century extreme sports, featuring such activities as dirt-jumping on bicycles, sky surfing, inline skating, freestyle motocross (which combines motorcycles and ski-like jumping), ice cycling, snowboarding, and skateboarding on half pipes—reactions against what the extreme skier Kristin Ulmer, in *The Extreme Game*, calls a "scaredy-cat culture." Risk-taking became commodified leisure as the marketplace, seeking to profit from the new norm, generated extreme sports parks, new lines of clothing and footwear, nutritional additives, and televised X-games. The movement was significant enough that in 1999 the United States became the first country to honor extreme sports on its postage stamps.

See also: INJURY MORTALITY; SEX AND DEATH, CONNECTION OF; SUICIDE BASICS: EPIDEMIOLOGY; SUICIDE TYPES: INDIRECT SUICIDE

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TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD

Since its first English translation in 1927, the Tibetan guide to spiritual and mental liberation called the *Bardo Thodol* has been known in the West as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The book has reappeared in several English-language versions since then, some based only loosely on the original. The text has thus lived several lives in English alone, appearing to be reborn time and again before new audiences, often with varying titles and content. Yet these recent lives are part of a much older cycle of rebirths. The original is believed to have been composed in the eighth century C.E. by the great master Padma Sambhava, then hidden away by its author for the salvation of future generations. The text was rediscovered six centuries later by Karma Lingpa, believed by some to be an incarnation of Padma Sambhava himself. Since the fourteenth century C.E. the text has occupied a central place in Tibetan Buddhism, giving birth to a large number of parallel, supplementary, and derivative texts.

W. Y. Evans-Wentz coined the English title for the 1927 edition on the basis of analogies he perceived with the Egyptian funerary text *The Book of Coming Forth By Day*, known in the West as the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Both the Tibetan and Egyptian Books discuss death and its aftermath. Yet their views of death are sufficiently different from

the Judeo-Christian tradition that the English titles are quite misleading.

This is particularly so in the case of the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*. The Tibetan title, *Bardo Thodol*, does not refer to death as such. *Thodol* means "liberation through understanding." *Bardo* means a "between state," an interval or transition between two mental states, whether experienced in life or after death. Hence the work's Tibetan title (which might be translated more literally as *Liberation through Understanding the Between*) alludes to bardo states that may be experienced at any point over the cycle of life, death and rebirth, yet the work itself overtly discusses only the bardo states experienced during death, offering explicit instruction on how to navigate them.

It is difficult to appreciate the significance of the work's overt content without a sense of its larger cultural context. The *Bardo Thodol* presupposes a cosmology of human experience in which existence is viewed as inherently fluid and impermanent, as involving a series of stages, of which death is merely one. The mind or soul continues to live after death, undergoing a series of experiences before rebirth. Human beings are believed to be able to guide themselves through the entire cycle by creating a more focused self-awareness through their powers of concentration, augmented, ideally, by means of meditation. The chief utility of meditation during life, or of the *Bardo Thodol* at the time of dying, lies in making the mind lucid enough to control its own passage over the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The larger goal of these practices is to seek liberation from the suffering associated with this cycle, both for oneself and for others.

The Bardo States

Six main bardo experiences are distinguished in Tibetan Buddhism: Three are encountered during life and three are encountered after death. A single life span is itself a bardo state, a transitional zone in a larger cycle of rebirths. Dreams are bardo states that occur within the daily round, in the interval between falling asleep and waking; feelings of uncertainty, paranoia, and delusion are sometimes grouped with dreams on a looser interpretation of this second bardo state. A meditative trance is a third type of bardo state, an intermediate zone between ordinary consciousness and enlightened awareness. These are the main bardo states of life.

Death involves bardo states as well. On the Tibetan view, death is not an instantaneous event but a process taking several days, involving a successive dissociation of mind from body, which is manifested in characteristic outward signs. During this process, the conscious mind experiences three main bardo states.

The first of these, called the *Chikai Bardo*, is the experience of the death point, the moment at which the soul loses consciousness of objects and becomes aware only of itself. The experience is described as a vivid formless light emanating from all sides. At this moment, enlightenment lies close at hand, although one's capacity to attain it depends on the extent to which one has achieved lucidity and detachment in one's previous existence. For most individuals the vision of light can only be sustained for a brief interval, after which the soul, caught in desire and delusion, regresses toward lower levels of existence.

In the second state, called the *Chonyid Bardo*, the soul has visions involving a succession of deities: a series of beatific Buddhas in the first seven days, a series of terrifying deities in the next seven. The text describes these visions as projections of the mind's own consciousness, often involving a tension within the mind itself. For example, the dazzling visions of the beatific deities are accompanied by duller visions of other beings that distract from the splendor of the former. To be thus distracted is to give in to anger, terror, pride, egotism, jealousy, and other weaknesses. In contrast, to ignore the minor visions and to embrace the more awe-inspiring deities is to attain spiritual salvation through the very act.

A mind that fails to overcome these weaknesses encounters the darker, more horrific deities of the latter seven days. Many of these visions are merely aspects of the Buddhas encountered in the first seven days, now made terrifying by the mind's own weakness. Liberation is still possible here simply by recognizing these beings for who they are. Yet the act is also more difficult now because terror forces the mind to flee rather than to examine its experiences.

A mind that has failed to free itself by this point enters the *Sidpa Bardo*, the third, most desperate stage. Here the mind faces a host of hallucinations, including visions of pursuit by demons and furies, of being devoured and hacked to

pieces. A mind may linger here for many weeks—up to the forty-ninth day after death—depending on the faculties of the particular individual.

These experiences culminate in rebirth in some sentient form. Whether one is reborn as human or animal, or is relegated for a time to one of the many Tibetan hells, or whether one achieves liberation from the entire cycle of life and rebirth, thus attaining Buddhahood, depends on one's success in overcoming weakness over the course of the cycle.

Although the *Bardo Thodol* is a guide to the bardo states experienced after death, it can only be read by the living. It may be read in preparation for one's own death, or at the deathbed of another. Because the weaknesses attributed to the dead are all experienced by the living as well, a person learning to traverse the bardo states of death will learn to navigate better the bardo experiences of life as well. In this sense the book is a guide to liberation across the entire cycle of human existence as conceived in Tibetan Buddhism.

See also: DYING, PROCESS OF; EGYPTIAN BOOK OF THE DEAD; MOMENT OF DEATH; STAGE THEORY

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ASIF AGHA

TITANIC

When the supposedly unsinkable luxury liner *Titanic* hit an iceberg and sank in April 1912, killing 1,513 people, the disaster altered Western civilization's confidence in the very notion of progress. The *Titanic's* doom has been exactly recounted and re-created in countless books and documentaries, a Broadway musical, and three major motion pictures, the last of which, *Titanic* (1997), set records at the box office.

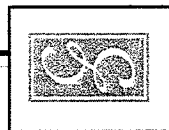
The early-twentieth-century equivalent of a space station or supercomputer, the *Titanic* was a vessel that inspired awe not only for its gargantuan dimensions and lavish accommodations but also for its claimed unsinkability, purportedly guaranteed by a double-bottomed hull with sixteen watertight compartments that would keep the ship afloat even if four were flooded, an unimaginable contingency.

Weighing 53,000 metric tons and measuring 882 1/2 feet long, the *Titanic* was the largest ocean liner of the era, and by far the most extravagant and splendid. It featured a theater, a variety of elegant restaurants, a reading and writing room, a gym, a barbershop, a swimming pool, a miniature golf course, ballrooms, and first-class cabins of unparalleled size and sumptuousness. The *Titanic* promised a dazzling voyage for those who could afford it—the top price for first-class passage was \$4,350 (about \$50,000 in twenty-first-century dollars). Its superabundance in nearly every particular was marred by one fatal deficiency: It carried lifeboats for only half of the ship's passenger capacity of 2,200.

Thus provisioned, on April 10, 1912, the *Titanic* set out from Southampton, England, on its much-heralded maiden voyage, bound for New York City. The ship's first-class passenger list was a roster of the elite of Anglo-American high society, politics, and industry, including the mining tycoon Benjamin Guggenheim; John Jacob Astor; Major



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