



THE MEANING OF NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

by

Carl Becker
Professor of Comparative Thought
Faculty of Integrated Human Sciences
Kyoto University
Kyoto, JAPAN

The Twenty-first International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Washington, D.C. November 24-30, 1997

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Dr. Carl Becker, Human Sciences, Kyoto University

Over the past 20 years, the mass media has acquainted the Western public with the phenomenon of Near-Death Experiences. NDE's are hardly a new phenomenon, but their scientific study has gained legitimacy only recently. Thousands of cases have been gathered into data banks at centers like the University of Connecticut's International Association for Near-Death Studies, and scholarly journals like the Journal for Near-Death Studies provide fora for the debate of scholarly hypotheses about the nature and meaning of NDE's.

First of all, what are NDE's? To clarify this question, let us remember that physical death is a long and slow process. In cases of natural death, first the lungs stop breathing, then the heart stops beating, and with the cessation of blood flow to the brain, the brain stops reacting. Many cells in the body continue to live for hours or days thereafter, but when central brain functions cannot be restored, most cultures consider the person dead.

Now some people report NDE's when revived from apnea, as in drowning cases; others after cardio-pulmonary resuscitation from heart-failure; still others after temporary brain death of as much as 12 hours.¹ However, a large number of NDE's are reported

NOT by people temporarily dead, but by those expecting to die soon, like people falling from heights, or bed-ridden hospital patients before their deaths. Searches for common physiological factors, such as particular body- or brain-states, have been notably unsuccessful; NDE's cannot be diagnosed or predicted in terms of any particular physical condition.²

How then are NDE's to be defined? Since they cannot be defined biophysically, they are generally defined in terms of their content. Researchers widely agree that they can be characterized by the following elements:³

- (1) Out-of-Body Experience: Consciousness observing this world from a location other than that of the physical body.
- (2) Tunnel or Black Hole Experience: Empty solitude in a cold dark place
- (3) Realm of Light: Flowers, fields, and nature imagery glowing with color.
- (4) Figure of Light: "God," Jesus, bodhisattvas or ancestors meeting and guiding the dying person.
- (5) Life Review: Being shown one's life and asked to evaluate it.
- (6) Barrier: Seeing an impassable barrier, or being sent back to the body.
- (7) Fears vanish: Convinced of having seen the world after death, the subject loses all fear of death and dying.

Not all of these elements are found in all NDE's, nor is their order fixed. Ring and others have developed weighted scales

to evaluate the depth as well as the variety of the experiences.⁴ But it is remarkable that so many people from different backgrounds and cultures report NDE's which are fundamentally similar in content.

Here it should be noted that of the millions of people who die, less than one percent revive from near death, and less than one percent of those who revive have reported NDE's. There are at least three possibilities: Many people who remember NDE's do not report them (perhaps for fear of ridicule?). Many people who have NDE's do not remember them. Many people who die or approach death do not have NDE's. These possibilities are not mutually exclusive; all are possible. However, research to date tends to indicate that people who normally remember their dreams most clearly tend to remember their NDE's most clearly. The majority of modern people who do not even remember their nightly dreams in detail are not likely to remember NDE's in detail.

Naturally, this leads to the hypothesis that NDE's are a form of dream, for like dreams, they are unobservable to anyone but the experiencer. However, the contents of NDE's differ from that of dreams and hallucinations on a number of counts. Dream content is wide-ranging, with scenes changing randomly, whereas NDE content follows a "logical" plot, with few sudden switching of characters. Dream content is centered on the individual generating the dream, whereas NDE's seem to follow a story-line generated by some other agency, such as the "take-away"

intentions of the "figure of light," which the experiencer must follow regardless of her inclinations. Dream content varies wildly from dreamer to dreamer, whereas NDE's exhibit similarity of contents from experiencer to experiencer. Dreams center on living and fictional-composite figures, hardly ever including dead people, whereas NDE's center on dead and religious figures, hardly ever including the living.⁵

While there are rare cases of veridical dreams, NDE's which provide veridical information to which the experiencer has no normal access are quite common.⁶ Among such cases are out-of-body experiences, wherein the patient returns to her home and can identify what people are doing what, in what time and place. There are so-called "Peak in Darien" Cases, in which the patient learns information known only to the dead, or meets people she had not known to be dead.⁷ There are cases in which patients meet their great-grandfathers or patron saints, whose appearance is quite different from their expectation but is later found to correlate to the real appearance of those ancestors or saints when alive.⁸ There are not infrequent cases like those of Carl Gustav Jung, in which the patient learns that someone else is on the verge of death.⁹ These cases are all somewhat difficult to reconcile with the "mere dream" theory.

Particularly hard to reconcile are the accounts of NDEs from subjects who were temporarily without brain function. To avoid the implications of this phenomenon, there are those who

speculate that all the information gained in NDE's might be gathered instantaneously prior to the revival of the patient, just as it was once speculated that dreams are seen instantaneously before awaking. However, dream research has made clear that dreams are seen periodically but continuously throughout the night, and not merely instants before waking. Comparison of OBE-type NDE's with the events their experiencers remember observing sometimes shows a temporal correlation between an observed verifiable situation and a time when the patient were devoid of brain activity. So the "all seen in an instant" hypothesis becomes weaker and more complicated than a "genuinely experienced" hypothesis, however counterintuitive it might appear.

NDE research in modern times dates to 1898, when geologist Albert Heim collected accounts of NDE's from fellow Alpinists in the Swiss Alpine Jahrbuch. It was followed by accounts collected in the 1920's by Sir William Barrett in England, and by Bozzano in France and Italy.¹⁰ However, NDE research underwent a lull from the roaring '20's until the roaring "70's." In the '70's, GI's saved from the jaws of death in Vietnam reported remarkably similar NDE's.¹¹ Chicago physician Elisabeth Kubler-Ross collected dozens of impressive stories from her Cook County Hospital wards.¹² Philosophy professor Raymond Moody Junior encountered numerous stories of NDE's from his college students, and Icelandic professors Karlis Osis and Erlendur Haraldsson found

remarkable similarities among East Indian and American accounts.¹³ These virtually simultaneous reports of NDEs led to an explosion of interest in the mass media, creating an atmosphere where it became easier to report NDEs without being thought mentally disturbed. Many European and American cities even started local support groups for "returnees from the other side."¹⁴

Reception from the established churches shows an amusing story. The initial reaction of the churches was one of warm welcome for their concern with, if not confirmation of, the afterlife. However, subsequent examination revealed that the next world was quite different than that predicted by Christian dogma. In particular, scenes of judgment and hellfire were notably rare. As it increasingly came to seem that church membership had nothing to do with the kind of "salvation" reported by NDErs, the Christian churches took an increasingly skeptical stance, some even condemning them as the work of the Great Deceiver. Politics made strange bedfellows, as conservative Christians found themselves in the same camp as the radical materialists, who were also condemning NDE research on the basis that it violated known "science," such as the mind-brain identity theory. Interestingly, the Mormon Church has tended to welcome NDE research, presumably for its demonstration of the importance of family ties reaching across the transition of death into the next life.¹⁵

Research in anthropological and classical literatures of the

world revealed that NDE's were far from unique to Western or modern societies. Over the past 15 years, issues of the Journal of Near-Death Studies have reported NDEs from Polynesia and New Zealand, from the Middle and Far East, from Latin America and from most countries of Europe. The Venerable Bede reported that a Northumbrian named Drythelm entered a monastery after reporting an NDE in 731; Carol Zalesky discovered numerous accounts of NDEs in medieval Europe.¹⁶ Resuscitation of plague victims as so common that it led to the invention of caskets with life-support systems and bells operable from the inside -- and to embalming laws that would surely prevent revival!¹⁷

Outside the major Western tradition, E.B. Tylor reported the case of a New Zealand Maori's death, burial, and revival, surprisingly similar to Western accounts that could hardly have influenced it.¹⁸

NDEs clearly occurred in China prior to the introduction of Buddhism in the fourth century. With their strong interest in revering their ancestors, Chinese were naturally concerned with the destinations and conditions of their ancestors after death. DeGroot describes NDE's reported in the 5th and 6th centuries B.C, in which Taoists were taken to meet the Emperor of heaven while temporarily dead.¹⁹ Kao recounts 5th century accounts in which Buddhists were escorted through hells, purgatories, and heavenly lands, and told to report their NDEs to people still alive, who were indeed much impressed by these accounts. These

lands were reported to be ruled by Yama (the God of the Dead), or in some cases by Ksitigarbha (the messenger/travelers' Buddha), Maitreya (the Buddha of the future), or even Bhaisajya (the healing Buddha).²⁰ The correspondence between the Buddhas seen and the Buddhas most popular in those regions and times gives rise to the debate about whether the religious tradition shaped the religious experience, or whether the religious experience informed the religious tradition.

In the case of Pure Land Buddhism, there is less room for doubt. The Pure Land scriptures hold that the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life (Amida) created a metaphysical realm of image-projection where departed souls could rest without being reborn into the sorrows of samsara, and without the impediments to meditation that a body incurs (hence, the "Pure" Land). The introduction of these texts and traditions to China clearly depend upon the remarkable death-bed and visionary experiences of Tao-an and Hui-Yuan in Southern China in the late fourth and early fifth century, and of Tan-luan, Tao-ch'o, and Shan-tao in North China in the sixth and seventh centuries.²¹ Indeed the standardization of paintings and doctrines of hell in eighth century China was based on the visions of monks like Chang Hsiao-shih, just as the standardization of paintings and doctrines of Amida greeting the dying person was based on the visions and experiences of Japanese monks in the tenth through twelfth centuries.²²

Japanese NDEs in the tenth through twelfth centuries were widely recorded in texts like the *Nihon Ojo Gokurakuki*, the *Ryoiki*, the *Fuso Ryakki*, and the *Uji Shui*.²³ But certain features of Japanese NDEs -- particularly being disrobed on the bank of a broad river before being ferried across it -- were not found in previous Buddhist traditions (although highly analogous to the Rivers Acheron and Styx from Greek mythology to Dante!). These features of Japanese NDEs led to an interesting dilemma: Japanese wanted to be dying "good deaths" in accord with Buddhist tradition, but their NDEs showed features not expected in pre-Japanese Buddhism. The solution lay in discovering a "new" Sutra, the Ten Kings Sutra, which combined the imagery of the Ten Hells described by earlier Chinese NDEs with that of the riverbank disrobing scenes and ferrying described by Japanese NDEs. Critical reading shows that the Ten Kings Sutra was invented by the 11th century Japanese, for it contains hieroglyphs and grammatical mistakes unique to the Japanese, but it enabled Buddhists to reconcile their experience with their faith, and soon won wide acceptance throughout the land. (Even today, Japanese NDEs are typified by accounts of broad rivers!)

Recording eyewitnessed accounts of Japanese NDEs remained a popular religious practice in Japan until Buddhism was virtually outlawed by the Meiji Restoration of 1868; even today, accounts of NDEs can be found from Taiwan, although the materialist bent of Chinese and Japanese education since the late 1940's has

rendered it unfashionable to report them.

Yet another non-Western source of rich deathbed imagery is the Tibetan Book of the Dead, a text designed to guide the soul through its wanderings after departing the body. After a bright flash of light at death itself, the soul experiences seven "days" of heavenly deities, and seven days of hellish ones, followed by five weeks of wandering disembodied through other-worldly landscapes before choosing a womb into which to be reborn. From the view of the Book of the Dead, other cultures' NDEs, lasting but a few days, only glimpse the first elements of the process of rebirth, while the Book traces the whole process to the reassociation of the soul with a fetus, 49 days after death.²⁴

Cultural/historical differences and Philosophical Implications

The overall themes and trends of NDEs in past and present times, in Western and non-Western cultures, are so similar as to have aroused great excitement and debate among the scholarly community. Some take their similarities as indication of "authenticity" or "reality," others as proof of some sort of archetypes in a Jungian "collective subconscious," still others as evidence of cross-cultural borrowing of other-worldly mythology, if not of the whole NDE itself.

Nevertheless, there are distinct and interesting differences between periods and cultures. In China and Japan, as noted above

for example, the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas most seen are those most widely worshipped in each dynasty. In twentieth century China and Japan, Buddha figures are rarely reported, but rather the (deified) ancestors of the patients often appear as the central "figure of light." In the West, the "figure of light" may be called "God," "Moses," "Jesus," or one of the saints or prophets revered in the patient's own tradition. Thematically speaking, the "figure of light" has a common purpose and meaning: to guide the departed around the next "realm," and back to the realm of the living, however temporarily. Regardless of age and culture, the "figure of light" has an aura of wisdom and compassion, love and protection, and a telepathic comprehension of the feelings of the subject.

Regarding the "barrier experience," many Westerners report seeing cliffs, canyons, fences, or walls over which they could not pass without difficulty, and once passed over, would be difficult to return. Chinese also reported walls, but Japanese tended to see rivers, Polynesians seas, and Tibetans "chasms." Here too, the imagery is based on the language and cultural experience of the subject, but shares a common underlying theme: "thus far, and no farther"; a point of decision from which there is no return.

Or again, looking at the feature of "life reviews," we may observe four variations. Some subjects see their lives in their entirety, as if replayed before them; others see only significant

moments, as if in slides or snapshots. Some see their lives as remembered from their own eyes and ears, but others see them from a detached third-person perspective, as if replayed from the mind of God. The combination of two modes and two perspectives total four kinds of life review. Still others see not their own lives, but have their lives judged by a holy magistrate, or witness the hellish tortures of others who failed to repent or live rightly, producing a period of contrition and repentance after their return to life. Here again, despite some variation among the specific imagery, there is a common underlying thread of moral reevaluation and repentance across the range of accounts.

These differences and commonalities enable speculation of the following sort. If anything survives bodily death, it is clearly not the body, which is burned or putrefies in short order; it is the consciousness, which survives in another "realm." If we postulate a realm of pure consciousness, as do Plato, Sankara, Bradley, the Pure Land Sutras, and even Augustine or Aquinas, in their own ways, then the "objects" of that "realm" cannot be physical things, but are rather pure conception or ideation. Then let us imagine that a "body of consciousness" (for lack of a better term), used to residing in a physical body for a number of years, suddenly finds itself in a realm of pure consciousness. Faced with the pure conception of "compassion," or the pure idea of "no further," or the forced necessity of "self-evaluation," how would that body depict those conceptions to itself? It were

quite reasonable to propose that, just as our subconscious clothes our fears or desires with the appearances of ogres or angels in our dreams, so our post-mortem consciousness (if it continues), clothes its encounters with pure ideation in forms and language which suit its level of understanding. Indeed, this is precisely what the Pure Land Sutras propose: that all experience in the next world is mental, like a Berkeleyan world; we imagine ourselves to be eating, walking, or talking, but in fact all our activity is that of pure mentation. As I have elaborated on the philosophical implications of this elsewhere, I shall not belabor the point here.²⁵

Applications

The study of NDE's thus has implications for philosophy, theology, and the comparative study of religions. But it also has more immediate and practical applications to problems in daily life. Among the most widely known is the deathbed counseling of the terminally ill, so publicized by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Kubler-Ross' study of NDEs was a byproduct, rather than an aim, of her life-long work with the terminally ill, but she found it had immediate and beneficial application to her patients. The vast majority of terminal patients retain a deep-seated fear of death that plays itself out in a series of psychological stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Kubler-Ross found that frank discussion of the possibilities of

conscious continuation after death brought great relief and even hope to numerous terminal patients, and she devised methods to facilitate this discussion even with children or reluctant patients.

The idea of another world beyond this one has given great comfort both to the dying and to the bereaved, both in Christian hospitals and hospices, and in Buddhist terminal care settings, over the centuries, and the need to reassure the dying has never been greater than in the materialistic if not nihilistic modern age. Raymond Moody and Ken Ring have advocated and practiced this mode of relieving the fear of death by sharing their work on NDEs with those who face similar fears. There are now support groups in many cities in Europe and North America which help NDErs to share their own experiences both with each other and then with the larger community.

Curiously, another application of NDE study is to suicide counseling and prevention, in which I have been active in Japan. While the vast majority of NDEs are full of sweetness and light, even to the extent that the experiencer is reluctant to return to this world, a significant exception must be noted with regard to attempted suicides.²⁶ Many suicide attempters return to report darkness, loneliness, or unpleasant NDEs (perhaps triggered by the anger or fear that motivated them to suicide in the first place?). Most people contemplating suicide see it as an escape from difficulties, frustrations, or loneliness in this life. If,

like Hamlet, they come to realize that their bad dreams may continue unabated even after death, then they may stay their hands and contemplate alternative resolutions to their problems. I have acquainted a number of would-be suicide patients with the possibility that their deaths would not be the end of their experience, and it has always led to a decision, however painful, to try to address the problems of this life rather than fleeing them.

Conversely speaking, many NDErs report that they return to this life and body with an unshakable feeling that we are all here for some purpose; that there is something that each of us must learn and contribute before we are finished with this life. This is also a message that strongly needs to be communicated, not only to those who are critically on the verge of suicide, but indeed to all people in modern society who are in danger of feeling alienated, purposeless, or meaningless. If we believe, and convince others to believe, that there is ultimately some purpose to each of our lives, then this can be a tremendously energizing and motivating factor, a response to the possible value-annihilation of deconstruction and some forms of existentialism. The belief that we have, must find, and can live on the basis of some higher purpose is a tremendous salvation of its own sort for everyone from suicide-prone students to bored housewives.

At the same time, a continuous consciousness of the finitude

of our human existence makes each moment feel that much more precious. When we are about to leave one school, job, or community to move to another, our feelings for that old environs change. When we remind ourselves that we may never see our old friends, offices, trees, or even rivals, again, a nostalgic fondness and sense of dearness well up in our breasts, even before we part. Similarly, if we remind ourselves that we are merely transient visitors to this earthly plane, never knowing when we shall meet each of our acquaintances again, then each becomes unutterably precious in our minds, and we take the time to communicate more carefully and feel more deeply than if we take everything "for granted" as part of an unbroken routine. The nuisances of traffic jams, bill-paying, and hard-disk crashes become somewhat more bearable, if not amusing, if we can take the stance, *sub specie aeternitatis*, of temporary visitors to this sphere, who ultimately have more important things to do, learn, and contribute before going on.

Ernest Becker won the Pulitzer Prize for demonstrating how much of our accumulation of capital, goods, and fame is an attempt to divert our gaze from the inevitability of death which renders all such things essentially meaningless²⁷ (as the danse macabre and memento mori of medieval Europe had proclaimed in different terms). Becker's conclusion, as independently realized by countless NDers, is that a consciousness of death proclaims values of compassion, charity, love, wisdom, and fellowship

infinitely higher than any accumulation of material goods and capital. But this is a lesson that our modern society can not be told too often. Indeed, only if we come to feel this on a world scale will we be able to curb the capitalist headlong rush to consume and exhaust the world's resources in a whirl of high-tech pollution, and replace it with a society of more humane and less materially-minded citizens.

Many world religions teach the judgment of the dead, and this has served as a valuable moral goad for hundreds of generations, however factual or mythological its basis. Perhaps even more challenging is the idea, voiced by many NDEs, that we each must judge ourselves when our time on earth is finished. Indeed, even terminal patients who do not report NDEs per se, spend many of their last days in reviewing the events of their lives and repenting their poorer judgments. Recognizing this, we need not wait until our dying moments, but can reflect on each day as we retire, being grateful for the good we have been able to express, or reflecting on our mistakes and planning ways to live better in the next day. Learning to live with higher purposes, to live without regret whether judged by self or by others, is a lesson taught by a majority of NDEs, and a needed counterpoise to the materialism of the modern world.

When we look back at our lives as if they were ending, and ask ourselves, "what has really been the most memorable and worthwhile?". surely money, fame, and rank pale beside moments of

discovery, of insight, of creating beauty, healing pain, or bringing joy to others. The insidious tendencies to judge people (and ourselves) by the titles they hold, the clothes they wear, the cards they carry, or the cars and houses they command are seen as vacuous when we learn to see the ways that they (and we) treat others, contribute to our societies, or destroy our environments, as more central. The scriptural injunction to "judge not, lest ye be judged" takes on new immediacy. We can smile and praise people who are still concerned with making money or gaining rank, just as we smile at our son collecting marbles or Boy Scout Merit Badges, without being caught up into believing that they have more than temporary and conventional significance. Conversely, an assurance that this life is only one part of a much longer process grants a freedom to speech and action. While unconcerned with personal pride and position, we become unafraid to stand up for the oppressed or the environment -- even in the face of bosses or transnational corporations which buffalo anyone in awe of their "power." These too are lessons related by NDErs.

Finally, the careful study of NDEs has ongoing implications for issues of brain death and prolongation of vegetative-state patients. On the one hand, Kubler-Ross and others have reported cases of people experiencing NDEs and reviving after periods of more than 12 hours of flat brain waves. These cases call into question the present standards of brain death widely applied to respirator-supported patients.

On the other hand, the very concern to prolong the cellular life of the body beyond all possibility of resuscitation or revival of the patient is based in a medical mythology that this world is all that exists. If people come (once again) to believe that consciousness can continue apart from the brain at death, and indeed that consciousness rather than body is what is central to personhood, then tremendous expenditures of capital and resources on vegetative-state patients may ultimately be redirected to more pressing medical needs, like sanitation and basic health care for millions of slum-dwelling citizens.

Ultimately, what began as a study of death and dying leads us back to a study of life and living. Studies of NDEs demonstrate that humans have the capacity for unusual insights and even "paranormal" powers, which deserve further careful study. No religion has a monopoly on NDEs. They show certain deep-rooted commonalities across the human community, overriding cultural and chronological differences. They challenge the naive materialism of the mind-brain identity theory, and call for a more holistic view of the universe. Placing our value-assumptions in a new perspective, reports from NDEs new and old challenge us to rethink our lifestyles and deathstyles, to ask ourselves what we really think worthwhile.

NOTES

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3. Kenneth Ring, Life at Death (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980), pp. 23-33.
4. See Bruce Greyson, "The NDE Scale: Construction, Reliability, and Validity," Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 171 (1983) 369-375; cf. Ring, p. 40.
5. see Carl Becker, Paranormal Experience and Survival of Death, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 99-102.

6. Jean-Baptiste Delacour, Glimpses of the Beyond, trans. E. B. Garside, (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973), pp. 20, 106-107.
7. Karlis Osis and Erlendur Haraldsson, At the Hour of Death (New York: Avon, 1977), pp. 92-94, 173-182; cf. David C. Knight, The ESP Reader (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1969), p. 385-389.
8. See Carl Becker and Takuro Nobori, At the Moment of Death: A Japanese Near-Death Experience (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1992)
9. Carl G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections. (London: Collins & Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).
10. E. Bozzano, Phenomenes psychiques au moment de la mort. (Paris: Nicholas Renault, 1923); and Sir William Barrett: Death-bed Visions: The Psychological Experiences of the Dying. (London: Methuen, 1926).
11. M. A. O'Roark, "Life After Death: The Growing Evidence," McCall's, March, 1941, p. 28; cf. Wellesley T. Pole, Private Dowding (London: J. M. Watkins, 1917), p. 101.
12. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Death: The Final Stage of Growth (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975); and Living with Death and Dying (New York: Macmillan, 1982).

13. Raymond A Moody, Jr., Life After Life (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1976), and The Light Beyond (New York: Bantam Books, 1988); Osis and Haraldsson as cited in note 7 above.

14. See IANDS' periodical Vital Signs, which publicizes regional conferences and local meetings throughout North America.

15. Craig Lundahl, ed. A Collection of Near-Death Research Readings (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1985).

16. Bede, A History of the English Church and People (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1955), pp. 290ff.; and Carol Zalesky, Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

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19. J. M. DeGroot, The Religious System of China (New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1967 [rpt. of 1892 original]) pp. 113-114.

20. K. S. Y. Kao, Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and Fantastic (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press), pp. 166-175.
21. Erik Zürcher, The Buddhist Conquest of China (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), pp. 220-222; cf. Kenneth Ch'en, Buddhism in China, (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1964), p. 344.
22. Stephen F. Teiser, "Having Once Died and Returned to Life: Representations of Hell in Medieval China," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 48: 433-464.
23. See their summaries in Carl Becker, Breaking the Circle: Death and the Afterlife in Buddhism (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), pp. 66-76, and James McClenon, Wondrous Events: Foundations of Religious Beliefs (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 178-182.
24. see W. Y. Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), and "Introduction" to [The Tibetan] Book of the Dead, trans. Kazi Dawa-Samdub (London: Oxford University Press, 1957).
25. Becker, Breaking the Circle, esp. pp. 114-116; on applications, see pp. 138-144.

26. See Raymond J. Moody, Jr. Reflections on Life After Life (Atlanta: Mockingbird, 1977).

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