

*Journal*  
*of*  
Near-Death Studies

**Editor's Foreword** • *Bruce Greyson, M.D.*

**Guest Editorial: The Resurrection as Near-Death Experience** • *Roger B. Cook, M.A.*

**Motifs of Passage into Worlds Imaginary and Fantastic** • *F. Gordon Greene*

**The Phantom Leaf Effect and Its Implications for Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences** • *James C. Pace, R.N., D.S.N., M.Div. and Deborah L. Drumm, R.N.*

**Book Reviews:**

**Whole in One: The Near-Death Experience and the Ethic of Interconnectedness** by *David Lorimer* • *Kenneth Ring, Ph.D.*

**What Survives? Contemporary Explorations of Life After Death** edited by *Gary Doore* • *Joel Funk, Ph.D.*

**Volume 10, Number 4, Summer 1992**



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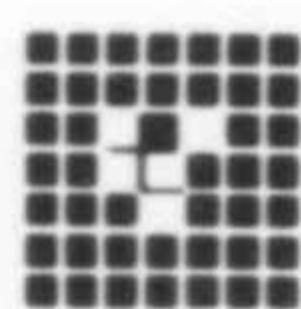
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**JOURNAL OF NEAR-DEATH STUDIES** (formerly ANABIOSIS) is sponsored by the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS). The Journal publishes articles on near-death experiences and on the empirical effects and theoretical implications of such events, and on such related phenomena as out-of-body experiences, deathbed visions, the experiences of dying persons, comparable experiences occurring under other circumstances, and the implications of such phenomena for our understanding of human consciousness and its relation to the life and death processes. The Journal is committed to an unbiased exploration of these issues, and specifically welcomes a variety of theoretical perspectives and interpretations that are grounded in empirical observation or research.

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## Editor's Foreword

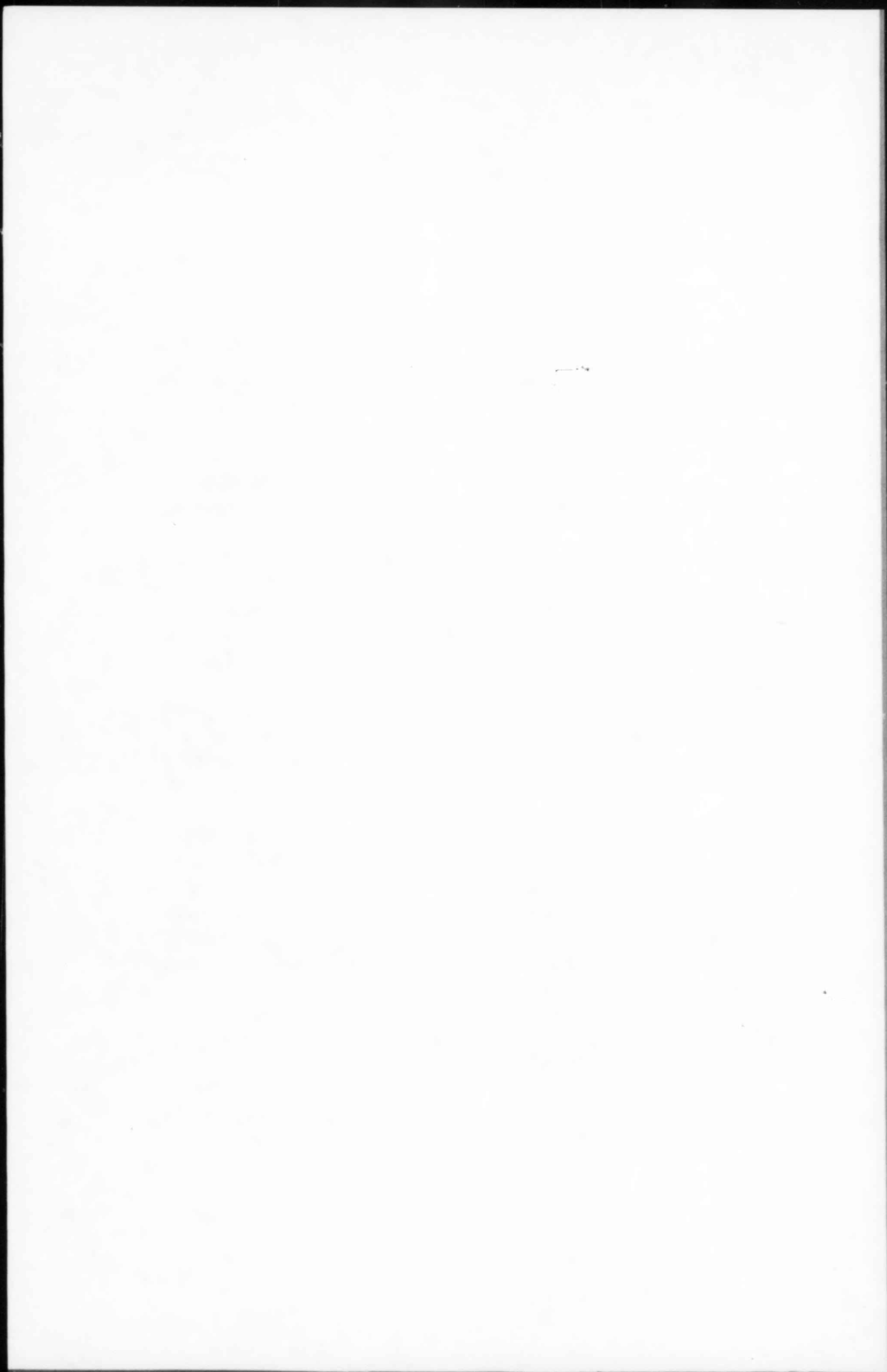
The current issue of the Journal opens with a provocative Guest Editorial by social scientist Roger Cook exploring the view that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ may have been a near-death experience (NDE). In our lead article, Gordon Greene compares the phenomenology of NDEs and the imagery of otherworld passages in classic modern fantasies and fairy tales. Greene proposes a metaphysically neutral depth psychology to explain these parallels, and considers the implications of various interpretations.

In another theoretical article, hospice chaplain James Pace and psychiatric nurse Deborah Drumm examine three different explanations, derived from Rupert Sheldrake's morphogenetic field theory, for the phantom leaf effect obtained with Kirlian photography. They then elaborate the implications of these three explanations for near-death and out-of-body phenomena.

We conclude this issue with psychologist Kenneth Ring's review of British philosopher David Lorimer's *Whole in One*, an exploration of the NDE's implications for a postmodern ethics; and psychologist Joel Funk's review of Gary Doore's thought-provoking anthology *What Survives?*

Finally, it has been brought to our attention that Stuart Twemlow's review (in the Summer 1991 issue of the Journal) of Melvin Morse's *Closer to the Light* included a sentence that could, in retrospect, have been read as impugning Morse's credibility. That reading was neither Twemlow's intent nor ours. The sentence in question stated that "At times the *style* [italics added] of the book has a careless and exaggerated quality"; that was certainly not meant to impugn the *content* of the book or the validity and value of Morse's research. We deeply regret this confusion, and apologize to Morse for any embarrassment or distress that may have resulted.

Bruce Greyson, M.D.



*Guest Editorial*

## **The Resurrection as Near-Death Experience**

Roger B. Cook, M.A.

**ABSTRACT:** I suggest in this paper that Jesus Christ was not clinically dead but in a deep coma when he was taken down from the cross. He was revived by Joseph of Arimathea, who was permitted to take Jesus's body into his care. By Pentecost, seven weeks later, Jesus had finally recovered from his wounds, and his reappearance convinced his followers that he was the Son of God. I suggest that the Resurrection was not a physical happening, but a near-death experience. As such, it was totally real to Christ himself, and it also confirmed his belief that he could, by proxy, discharge humanity's sins.

"In the beginning was the Word. . . ." The opening of St. John's Gospel has been a topic of exhaustive debate for centuries. Whatever it means, it certainly put a strong emphasis on communication. It is the *words* of the New Testament that have endured and influenced the lives, for good or ill, of countless millions. Whether they can be said to form an exact historical record of what happened and what was said 2,000 years ago is arguable, and I express some qualifications on this account below, but it is certain that after persistent repetition and wide dissemination these words have acquired a substantial presence in the life and culture of Western society.

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Roger B. Cook, M.A., was until 1991 a lecturer at the Open University, Milton Keynes, England. Reprint requests should be addressed to Mr. Cook at The Old Farmhouse, Steeple Langford, Salisbury, Wilts SP3 4LZ, United Kingdom.

The words of Jesus himself possess unique importance because he clearly anticipated that the death experience would take a particular form. He also foresaw that his experience would have great significance for the rest of humanity. Stripped of its religious connotations, it corresponded closely to the near-death experiences reported by many people today, with one important difference: Christ saw the experience as underpinning a code of behavior, indeed a way of life, based on forgiveness. As I will show below, the forgiveness so attained is neither a bargaining chip nor a perquisite received in return for leading a blameless life; it formed both the core of his religious philosophy and a central element of the final experience.

To suggest that Christ was not a divine being is to devalue his status as the Son of God, as well as to confront the problem of what "divinity" really means. However, problems of definition need not invalidate the essential thrust of his teaching, which may be summarized as attaining forgiveness for one's faults, so that the guilt and remorse they evoke do not overwhelm and finally obliterate the intense joy of the final experience.

Before considering the implications of such a view, I intend to argue four things: (1) that Christ was not dead when he was taken down from the cross; (2) that he was entombed while in a coma; (3) that he recovered and was nursed back to health; and (4) that none of these facts invalidates his claim—also the central tenet of the Christian religion—that by dying he would save men and women from punishment for their sins.

## **Evidence That Jesus Had a Near-Death Experience**

### *Evidence That Christ Did Not Die on the Cross*

The usual Roman practice was for a victim of crucifixion to be dispatched by having his legs broken. This would result in his whole weight hanging by the arms, since he would be deprived of the means by which he could push himself up, thus allowing his lungs to expand. No longer able to support his body weight in order to breathe, the victim died very quickly from asphyxiation. But in Christ's case, the Roman official responsible for seeing that the criminals were dead stayed the hands of those who had already broken the legs of the other two victims.

Christ was removed from the cross without having his legs broken because he had become lifeless by the criterion that prevailed at that time: he did not appear to be breathing. The significance of the heartbeat was not understood at that time. The apparent absence of breathing was considered sufficient evidence of death, but a spear thrust into the chest was a recognized means of making certain that the "breath of life" had left the body. In Christ's case it seemed to have had the effect of draining a pleural effusion, a mixture of blood and water, possibly the consequence of his having been scourged.

These facts were recorded by the witness whose testimony formed important parts of St. John's Gospel. Although this Gospel is considered more a theological account than a purely historical record, it included a number of significant events that come across with remarkable authenticity. The writer broke into the narrative in order to emphasize the actuality of what he had witnessed:

But when they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers stabbed his side with a lance, and at once there was a flow of blood and water. This is vouched for by an eye-witness, whose evidence is to be trusted. He knows that he speaks the truth, so that you too may believe. (John 19:33-36)

The Roman centurion had witnessed Jesus "giving up the ghost"; indeed, he is on record in the Synoptic Gospels as having been greatly impressed by Christ's bearing, and perhaps that is why he chose to spare Jesus the humiliation of having his legs broken.

### *Evidence that Christ Was Entombed While in a Coma*

Terrible though Jesus's wounds were, none were mortal. He had been conscious on the cross for a relatively short time. In Roman crucifixions, death rarely occurred before 36 hours had elapsed, and on occasion took as long as 9 days (Douglas, 1982). Jesus appeared to have been fully conscious on the cross for only 3 hours before lapsing into unconsciousness quite abruptly:

A jar stood there full of sour wine; so they soaked a sponge with wine, fixed it on a javelin, and held it up to his lips. Having received the wine, he said, "It is accomplished!" He bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:29-30)

It is quite possible that in his weak condition he gagged on the bitter liquid and lapsed into a coma. The rapidity of his apparent passing surprised Pontius Pilate, who according to one Gospel asked the centurion to confirm it. Jesus then remained on the cross for about 3 hours until Joseph of Arimathea, having obtained permission to bury the body, came to carry it away to his own private sepulchre.

The circumstantial evidence for Jesus being in a coma is reasonably coherent and the theory has circulated for a very long time. However, it has foundered in the past on two counts. First, it is inconceivable that he should have recovered the strength needed to remove the stone that sealed his tomb; and second, if he had then met the Disciples they would have seen a physical wreck in need of urgent medical attention, not their familiar leader and source of inspiration.

### *Evidence of Christ's Return to Health*

Rodney Hoare (1984) has suggested that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus discovered Jesus to be still alive when they began to prepare his body for laying out in Joseph's sepulchre, and that they then carried him away and took care of him until he was fully restored to health. In his subsequent encounters with his Disciples he was therefore a man of flesh and blood, not a spirit.

This version of events ties in closely with the Gospel account, at least up to the point at which the body of Jesus was lying in the sepulchre. Thereafter the Gospels conflict about what happened when the tomb was found to be empty, and about when and where Jesus appeared to his Disciples. But one definite chronological fact is that he was crucified at Passover and that the Disciples, fired with the certainty that they had seen their risen leader, triumphantly proclaimed his Resurrection at Pentecost, seven weeks after Passover. In these intervening seven weeks Jesus could have been restored to health and made the journeys to Emmaus and Galilee.

The most problematic aspect of this version of events, which apart from disparities over chronology fits very well with the Gospel accounts, is that no evidence has ever come to light about the subsequent years of Jesus's life. But there are good reasons why he should want to take no further part in spreading the message of the Gospel, indeed why he should want to avoid contact of any kind with his family or Disciples.

First, his near-death experience would have shown him that though his premonitions had been valid, and his "death" and resurrection had

taken place, they had not taken a physical form but had involved his inner self. Yet his claims had been abundantly vindicated: he had asserted that if one genuinely asked for God's forgiveness for harming others, one would not spend eternity—the product of one's dying moments—in the anguish of punishment that the devout Jew believed would be his fate. He had gone through all the stages of a near-death experience, including the encounter with a Being of Light; His predictions had been triumphantly vindicated.

Second, he must have known that his Disciples were making a tremendous stir in the land as they went about proclaiming his Resurrection. One can only speculate as to both his reactions and his plans for the rest of his life in such a situation. But withdrawal into anonymity or obscurity would seem a very logical option: he had nothing more to add, either in deeds or words, to the message of salvation and redemption. What he had achieved would be completely destroyed if the High Priests and the Pharisees managed to get hold of him. Roman efficiency and Jewish zealotry would not have been cheated of their prey a second time.

In fact his behavior was entirely consistent with a desire to show his followers that he had survived death, while at the same time keeping clear of the authorities. He displayed his wounds and broke bread with the Disciples on more than one occasion, yet he seemed to have managed the encounters in such a way that he could slip away without them following. He left them kneeling—"in the act of blessing he parted from them" (Luke 24:51)—or stayed only long enough to be recognized, as in the supper at Emmaus, and was assisted by their very natural awe: "None of the Disciples dared to ask 'Who are you?' " (John 21:12)

The most unsatisfactory aspect of this version is the contrast between the vividness and immediacy of the Gospel version of events up to and including the crucifixion and the scarcity of equally reliable information thereafter. Coupled with this is the perception that Joseph of Arimathea could hardly have kept Jesus so well hidden that no hint of his continued existence would have leaked out. However, on this reading Joseph and Nicodemus would have been the only two people to have known the truth about Christ's "death" on the cross and return to the world from a near-death experience. Both would have had to guard that secret with their lives, for at least three reasons.

In the first place, they had flagrantly perverted the due process of Roman law. Second, they had defiled themselves by meddling with that unclean thing, a dead body, which to add to their disgrace was that of a convicted felon. Third, they would forfeit all their pre-

eminence in the councils of the mighty if they were known to have had dealings with the dangerous sect founded by the dissident and trouble-maker, Jesus Christ.

Hoare (1984) made the point that the sociocultural gulf between Joseph of Arimathea and the class from which Jesus and the Disciples came was vast to the point of unbridgeability. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin and Nicodemus was said in the Talmud to have been so rich he could have fed the entire population of Israel for eight days. Jesus's followers, at the extreme other end of the social scale, would have had no way of learning about his restoration to health in the dwellings of the mighty.

So discouraged were his friends and family that they quickly left Jerusalem after the crucifixion and dispersed. The impression one receives is that Jesus felt the need to seek them out and show himself at a number of locations, such as by the Sea of Tiberius and on the road to Emmaus. He could do no more than make it plain that he had conquered death, and in doing so borne the sins of the Jewish people; it was for others to carry the message to the world at large.

### *Validation of Jesus's Claims*

Jesus's near-death event, if it took place as described here, did at least keep within the compass of the laws of nature as we know them: a man was tortured and nailed to a cross, fell into a deep coma and was taken away to be restored to health. Although awful to contemplate, no aspect of this interpretation need be unduly hard to believe. Resuscitation techniques have made returning from the frontier of death a relative commonplace today. But at that time, Jesus's experience was, as far as we know, unusual. Moreover, it happened to an unusually remarkable man.

Assuming that the near-death experience is as universal as current research tends to indicate, Jesus would seem to have penetrated the death process as far as the final frontier: the encounter with loved ones and a Being of Light. Any doubts he felt—and we know from the heartfelt cry "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" that he had one terrible moment of doubt—would have been totally annihilated when he embarked on the near-death experience.

### **Implications of Jesus's Near-Death Experience**

There are three aspects of Jesus's near-death experience I will elaborate below. First are the premonitions he had about the manner of his

death. Most of these relate to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and clearly have considerable significance for the convinced Christian, but they also have a logical framework quite independent of their religious connotations. Second, I will explore the evidence from the Gospels and reports in the Acts of the Apostles for the light they can throw on his near-death experience. Third and finally, I intend to show that Jesus's message was consistent both with his particular perception of death and the near-death experience as commonly understood today.

### *Premonitions*

One remarkable attribute of Jesus was his exhaustive knowledge of Jewish law and Scripture. It is easy to underestimate the weight and authority of this learning when it is set beside our burgeoning modern understanding of natural laws, and the consequent growth of science and technology that informs all aspects of life in the twentieth century. In first century Israel, however, all scientific knowledge was comprehended in "the Law and the Prophets." Jesus's understanding of them was, according to the Gospels, paramount; it was certainly superior to that of the leading Jewish scholars.

The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) supplied perhaps the clearest statement of how Jesus saw his role. Nicodemus was the equivalent of a modern skeptic, but with one significant difference: whereas now one would look to science for solutions, the only source of enlightenment in those days was Holy Writ. In his search for truth Nicodemus forced Jesus to confront the underlying implications of his teaching with the question: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus, adopting the normal conventions of such a dialogue, couched his answer in phrases derived from Scripture, but it became clear that what he was trying to teach lay beyond his hearer's capacity for understanding. "If you refuse to accept what I say about earthly things," he said, "what chance is there if I tell you about heavenly things?" There then followed the central tenets of his teaching, as they are repeated in the modern Communion service. He could not put his role into words more explicit than those. But their full meaning can only be clear to those who realize that he was describing a near-death experience rather than a return to bodily existence.

The different aspects of the death experience that he referred to during his ministry include these:

1. punishment and repentance (Matthew 4:17, 5:22-24, 7:1-2, 9:12-13, 11:20-24, 12:36, 13:49-50, 18:6, 24:50-51, 25:31-46; Luke 12:58-59, 13:1-5, 15:7, 15:11-32, 24:47; John 3:17, 8:24, 8:34, 9:39);
2. forgiveness and reconciliation (Matthew 5:7, 6:6, 6:18, 7:11, 11:28, 12:31-32, 12:37, 13:49-50, 18:3-4, 18:23-35; 25:31-36; Luke 6:37-38, 7:41-48, 12:58-59, 24:46-47; John 1:29, 5:29, 8:24, 8:36, 12:47-50, 20:23);
3. regeneration, resurrection, and redemption by works (Matthew 5:3-7:27, 6:4, 6:18, 6:20-21, 7:11-14, 7:21, 10:39, 10:42, 11:28-30, 13:41-43, 13:49, 16:27, 18:23-35, 18:28-30, 20:1-34, 22:30, 21:31-46; Luke 6:37-38, 9:27, 13:24, 16:1-9; John 2:21-22, 3:3-8, 5:21, 6:38-40, 6:53-58, 7:37-39, 10:17, 11:25, 12:47, 14:3, 17:1-26, 18:36);
4. role as Messiah and light of the world (Matthew 16:27-28, 24:27; Luke 21:25-28; John 3:13-17, 7:16, 7:28, 8:12, 8:16-17, 10:7-9, 10:14-18, 11:27, 12:23, 12:32-33, 12:35-36, 12:46, 14:6, 14:1-16:33, 18:36);
5. sacrifice and sacrament; role as Lamb of God or scapegoat (John 1:29, 14:1-16:33, 17:14-18);
6. eternity and everlasting life (Matthew 5:1-12, 24:35; Luke 7:28, 20:36-38, 21:32-33, 23:43; John 1:51, 3:16-17, 3:36, 4:14, 6:27, 6:39-40, 6:47, 8:51, 8:56-58, 10:28, 11:26, 12:25, 12:32, 16:33, 17:2-3, 17:24, 21:20-23);
7. ineffability (Matthew 13:11-14; John 6:60, 8:31-43);
8. part of life cycle (Matthew 13:31-32; John 3:7-8, 12:24);
9. preparing a place (Matthew 13:43; John 6:44, 12:32, 12:36, 13:36, 14:2-6);
10. duty to evangelize (John 10:16, 15:8, 15:16, 20:23); and
11. timelessness of Last Judgment (Matthew 12:36-37, 24:35-36, 24:42-45, 25:31-46; Luke 21:27-28; John 5:24-30, 6:27, 6:54-58).

Judaism had always been permeated by the belief that obedience should be inculcated into an erring people; this was to be achieved by divine punishment and reward. Jesus was steeped in Jewish theology and therefore predisposed towards this view. Punishment—the everlasting fire—could in this view only be avoided by renouncing error and experiencing genuine contrition. Jesus therefore must have viewed the death process from this particular perspective. However, near-death experiences more recently reported do not point to eternal

damnation as an outcome, even for those such as suicides whose "sinful" decision to destroy life might be expected to invite punishment.

It is even conceivable that those with the most damnable sins on their consciences—murderers, child abusers, rapists—may experience a death that is positive and healing in its final stage. The life review, if it forms an element of such a person's death process, is likely to be particularly unpleasant, since it may involve a re-experiencing of the sin and the suffering it caused others. But after that may come reconciliation in the felt presence of a Being of Light.

According to Jewish theology of Christ's time, however, such sin would inevitably bring retribution on the sinner. Jesus perceived himself as the agent by whom this cycle of irrevocable condemnation could be broken. By taking upon himself the role of scapegoat, another characteristic feature of Judaic belief, and adapting it to that of sacrificial lamb, he would bear, by proxy, the sins of every sinner who called on him to do so.

Within such a framework, Jesus's premonitions, prophecies, and "sayings" take on a rational and logical coherence. It was a perspective that he might be said to have inherited from John the Baptist. John proclaimed him as the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world, and also as the promised Messiah. Jesus accepted this role and constantly justified his actions and sayings by reference to the relevant Scriptures. His teachings about death, listed above, can also be read as an exegesis of the New Testament from this perspective, demonstrating that the Gospel message is consistent with the near-death experience as we understand it today.

### *Jesus's Near-Death Experience and Its Consequences*

What transpired after Christ's death was an interpretation and re-framing by his close followers of his teaching and his biography into a doctrine, and finally a theology, that could account both for his judicial murder and his increasingly delayed second coming. Central to this formulation was the notion that the dead would experience resurrection at the same instant of earthly time.

However, when confronted with the testimony of those who have undergone a near-death experience, the only view of resurrection that makes sense is that the moment of death becomes the resurrection, the day of judgment, the Last Trump, or Armageddon, *for that individual*. And since death will be the moment of transition into a timeless dimension, the idea of resurrection at the same chronological instant

becomes meaningless. Shorn of this superfluity, the idea of a final experience shared (in the mind) with the great mass of humankind, past and present, can more reasonably be entertained.

The assumption into the company of all loved ones in the presence of a great white light becomes the central, final, and resolving part of the near-death experience, as I suggest it was for Jesus. Because he understood the significance of what had happened to him, he made every effort to tell the world about it.

But there was a certain mismatch between the evidence of his appearances and the interpretation of them by his followers. Apart from the disparities in chronology noted above, Christ's appearances were almost bound to take on the coloring of the supernatural. His Disciples had seen their beloved leader put to death before their eyes; they had subsequently seen him alive and well. His physicality was emphasized by Doubting Thomas feeling the spear wound in his side. Divine intervention of the Holy Spirit was the only explanation that could effect a match between the events they had experienced and their knowledge of the cycle of life and death.

The last verses of Chapter 20 of John's Gospel implied that not all Jesus's appearances had been included in the Gospel accounts:

There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of his Disciples, which are not recorded in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess life by his name. (John 20:30-31)

In the same way that he emphasized the quality of his testimony about Jesus "giving up the ghost," John here seemed to affirm that there were numerous appearances of the resurrected Jesus, but he could not vouch for them personally and hence omitted them.

### *Consequences*

Jesus's perception was in effect consistent not only with the near-death experience as it is known today by the millions who have experienced it; it also fitted closely the predictions of the prophets he had

studied so exhaustively. But it did not fit so neatly with the aspirations of the subject people chafed by the Roman yoke, awaiting a Messiah. The Gospel story is full of incidents wherein he was perceived as what we would today call a guerrilla leader or revolutionary, and was therefore obliged to construe the Scriptures so as to emphasize the essentially spiritual nature of his calling.

But he constantly returned to his theme: if you could obtain forgiveness from whomever you had harmed, your death would not be irretrievably marred by the guilt of your unresolved deed. However, if you were unable to effect a reconciliation, because the person you wronged was already dead or otherwise unreachable, then he, Jesus Christ, would take on the burden of your guilt, provided your contrition was genuine. Your own death might then be free of any harrowing life review, and you would certainly avoid that more lasting outcome of continuing remorse: an eternity in hell.

He may have been wrong about eternal suffering being the lot of those who do not take the opportunity to repent; perhaps it is intrinsic to the nature of the human organism that it will flare into some paradisaical experience in its final seconds, regardless of whatever violent inner turmoil of guilt and remorse may have been undergone. But since he was a profoundly religious Jew, punishment was central to his thinking.

The sheer power of Jesus's personality, presence, conviction, and charisma was such as to make a handful of ordinary men, from one subgroup in a not particularly favored colony of one early civilization, strong and sure enough of what they had seen to convince millions of others of the validity of his sayings and doings *even though they did not have the full picture*. They had witnessed him being put to death, and had subsequently seen him looking just as he had before his execution. That one incredible fact could not be ducked; it is hardly surprising they felt a compulsion to proclaim it to the world at large. In doing so they also gave some account of his miracles and parables, and the wisdom and compassion he had shown.

If one opts for the explanation that the crucifixion ended in a near-death experience, there need be nothing irrational in commemorating Christ's death and redemption after, say, the manner sanctified by the Church; that is a personal choice. Whether the solution he devised can be said to have had divine inspiration is a matter for debate by those who would ascribe a specific meaning to the word "divine." But the fact remains that Christ's interpretation was, and in my opinion still is, a totally logical response to the problem of death.

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# Motifs of Passage into Worlds Imaginary and Fantastic

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper I match phenomena associated with the passage into otherworlds as reported during out-of-body and near-death experiences, with imagery associated with the passage into otherworlds as depicted in classic modern fantasies and fairy tales. Both sources include sensations of consciousness separating from the body, floating and flying, passage through fluidic spaces or dark tunnels toward bright lights, and emergence into supernatural worlds inhabited by souls of the deceased and by higher spiritual beings; and both describe comparable psychophysical initiatory factors. I introduce a metaphysically neutral depth psychology to explain these parallels, examine two metaphysically opposed extensions to this depth psychology, and consider several implications of a transcendental perspective.

## Introduction

The prospect of a fantastic journey leading into realms of supernatural wonder has always fired the human imagination and probably always will. Such a journey may involve a voyage to remote islands or continents hidden in uncharted seas, a trek off the edge of the Earth's flat surface, a descent into the gloomy underworld below, an ascent into the starry heavens above, or a passage through a magical portal into dimensions unseen. Whatever the pathway, the possibility of such a fantastic journey speaks irresistibly to some deep facet of human nature, this is a facet possessed of a longing that must be appeased, if not fulfilled, in the realm of human imagination, if not in that of some extra mundane reality.

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In myth, saga, fairy tale, and fantasy, the theme of the fantastic journey has enthralled audiences. My reading of this literature has led me to a profound but previously unexplored relationship linking *literary* fantastic journeys to the *experiential* fantastic journey chronicled by out-of-the-body experiencers (OBErs) and near-death experiencers (NDErs). While several scholars have touched upon this relationship as evidenced in myths and revelatory literature (Grof and Halifax, 1977; Grof and Grof, 1980; Zaleski, 1987; Kalweit, 1988; Heinberg, 1989) and several others in modern literature (Greene, 1981; Greene and Krippner, 1990; Flynn, 1984; Straight, 1984; Moody and Perry 1988), no researcher has examined the relationship between literary and experiential fantastic journeys systematically or in depth.

That statement was true until the recent publication of Ioan Couliano's ground-breaking *Out of this World* (1991). Couliano's book provided the first historical overview of the relationship between literary and experiential fantastic journeys. Elsewhere (Greene, 1986) I observed that no general history of the NDE existed. With Couliano's work, this gap has been largely closed.

However, the real strength of Couliano's contribution lies not in any detailed analysis of the works he examines but rather in the impressive range of literatures his methodology encompasses. In the present paper, I introduce a complementary analysis of the relationship between literary and experiential fantastic journeys. My approach is to examine fewer works but in more detail than did Couliano. My primary emphasis is to illustrate how examples of literary fantastic journeys in classic modern fantasies and fairy tales correlate with experiential fantastic journeys. I will also attempt to make sense of why these parallels exist in the first place.

In this genre of fantastic literature, literal belief in the existence of the supernatural is often replaced by a figurative or whimsical belief. This "other realm" may not even be openly conceived of as supernatural, but rather as merely a product of the author's imagination. This shift in reality conceptions undoubtedly came about, at least in part, as a response to the rise of scientific materialism beginning in 17th century Europe. Yet these modern fantasies and fairy tales are typically structured within the contexts of cosmological beliefs about the supernatural predating the rise of modern science. Ranging in scope and sophistication from children's fairy tales to masterpieces of satire and polemic, these modern literary fantastic journeys include Jonathan Swift's satirical *Gulliver's Travels* (1726/1967), Lewis Carroll's twin tales of whimsy *Alice in Wonderland* (1865/1960) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871/1960), L. Frank Baum's American

fairy tale *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900/1982), James Barrie's visionary *Peter Pan* (1924/1988) and C.S. Lewis' religiously inspired *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1951). I also comment below on various film adaptations of these works and thematically related scenes from other films.

I begin by briefly reviewing the experiential components in out-of-the-body experiences (OBEs) and near-death experiences (NDEs), which I consider members of a broader class of human experience to be termed ecstatic condition, ecstatic experience, or simply ecstasy. I shall then highlight how preliminary ecstasies sometimes blossom into full blown experiential fantastic journeys.

### **On the Initiatory Factors and Phenomenological Structures of Ecstasy and the Experiential Fantastic Journey**

Ecstasy, as I define it, refers to the vivid sensation that one's locus of consciousness has lifted up into the air outside of one's physical body. Usually, this sense of separation occurs in conjunction with a reduced awareness or outright unconsciousness of one's physical body and of the sensory stimuli impinging upon the body. In cases where there is a real or imagined threat to life, the ecstasy is termed an NDE. Borderline sleep states, dreaming, fantasizing, meditating, contemplative praying, the ingestion of psychedelic substances, and even ordinary waking consciousness have also reportedly served as conduits to ecstasy. In these non-life-threatening circumstances, the ecstasy is called an OBE. If the ecstasy is not terminated by a more or less immediate return to physical body consciousness, experiencers may seem to partake in an ecstatic journey propelling them to any earthly location they may wish to visit. This seeming flight may even appear to launch experiencers entirely off our planet's surface to travel through celestial regions beyond. Both Carl Jung (1961) and Robert Monroe (1971) reported having been catapulted up off the face of the earth, during ecstatic conditions, to look down upon our planet as if from above. Both perceived our planet to be a radiant and living globe. Walt Whitman captured this same planetary vision in his mystical poem "Song of Myself" (1959/1855).

Yet another reported trajectory appears to lead ecstatic voyagers through fluidic spaces, dark elongated enclosures, or empty voids, to pass entirely outside the known parameters of space and time. Such voyagers may appear to pass into fantastic realms of existence and being that correspond, at least in part, to human conceptions of heaven

and hell. Other realms, not so easily codified within the eschatological cartography of human imagination, have also been described by ecstatic voyagers (Fox, 1962; Monroe, 1971, 1985). After having moved seemingly into these other realms, and after having interacted with the inhabitants found therein, be they angels, devils, historical religious personages, souls of the deceased, or other intelligent beings defying clearcut categorization, ecstatic voyagers return to ordinary bodily awareness.

In its highest manifestation, an ecstatic voyage culminates in a mystical experience. The ecstatic voyager seems to come into direct contact with Divine Intelligence or seems to become immersed within this intelligence. Alternately, mystically experience may involve the sense of having utterly transcended space and time to encompass, however fleetingly, all knowledge of the past, present, and future.

These apparent flights into the fantastic raise the following questions. Do experiential fantastic journeys actually launch experiencers into fantastic worlds and states of being beyond the known parameters of space and time? Or do such experiences refer only to a desperate human need to believe in the transcendent at any cost? If the former is true, such ecstatic journeys may possess *more reality* than most human beings may be able to endure, while remaining alive and bound to the physical universe. On the other hand, if the latter is true, this need to believe in the reality of the fantastic may be fueled by an unquenchable thirst, a thirst that may be able to draw upon the depths of the human imagination to construct any imaginable world.

Now, let me turn to a category of otherworld passage that does not present us with such questions: literary fantastic journeys that we have all grown accustomed to regarding as imaginary and unreal.

### Gulliver's Voyages into the Fantastic

I will begin in the 18th century European "Age of Enlightenment" with one of the greatest satires ever written, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. (1726/1967). In the first of these fantastic voyages, Gulliver, Swift's fictional mouthpiece, was a young seafaring gentleman of late 17th century England. He was shipwrecked aboard a British merchant ship sailing through the South Indian Ocean and waded ashore, half drowned, onto the imaginary island of Lilliput. He fell asleep in exhaustion and "woke up" the following day to find himself pinned to the beach by a series of tiny ropes under the watchful eyes of the six-inch-tall inhabitants of this realm. Following a period of

chained captivity at the hands of these elfin people, Gulliver was unchained after swearing total allegiance to the sovereign of Lilliput. Eventually, he built a sailboat and embarked for his home shore. Picked up in the open sea by a British merchant ship, he returned to England. In later voyages, Gulliver visited Brobdingnab, an imaginary medieval island kingdom of giants; Laputa, an imaginary flying island inhabited by "spaced out" scientists; and Glubbdubdrib, an imaginary island of sorcerers. He ended his voyages with a journey to the land of the Houyhnhnms, a realm of rational horses. Through the guise of the Houyhnhnms, we learn Swift's ideas about a Utopian society ruled by the rational intellect rather than by the emotions and the various base instincts possessed by "Yahoos." For Swift, the Yahoos represented all that is contemptible and repugnant about human nature.

Swift's classic satire found amusement at the expense of the political, educational, and scientific establishments of his day and at various famous persons of his acquaintance. At a deeper level, his scathing satire focused upon the imperfections of human nature. My concern, however, is with other elements in this fantasy, related to the experience of ecstasy, however deeply hidden beneath Swift's 18th century rationalist persona and antimystical Protestant demeanor. One significant parallel between Gulliver's adventure and ecstatic experience involves the imagery of the ocean. The ocean may be viewed symbolically as a boundary separating different worlds of experiential reality from one another. The solid ground of Gulliver's home shore, England, may be seen to represent a waking level, bodily-bound form of reality. The voyage onto an open sea may be construed as a quest to separate from the conventional boundaries of human culture, to examine society and the human condition at a distance.

When Gulliver's ship was wrecked on his first voyage abroad, he almost became "submerged" in the ocean and nearly drowned. The danger of drowning has sometimes served as a catalyst for NDEs (Audette, 1982; De Quincey, 1862/1956). Submergence in water may also be seen as a form of initiation or baptism leading the initiate into a more spiritually enlightened awareness of the universe and of him- or herself. After wading ashore, Gulliver collapsed from exhaustion and fell into a deep sleep. Sleep states serve as one of the most common routes into ecstatic conditions. Gulliver "awakened" the following day to find himself confronting a heretofore unexpected set of fantastic circumstances.

The South African mystic and scholar Michael Whiteman (1978) commented upon one mode of consciousness transition sometimes asso-

ciated with ecstasy, a mode of transition highly relevant to the present theme. He observed:

In transitional states between a physical state and a psychical one, or between a psychical state and a mystical one, instead of one space gradually or suddenly displacing the other, there is sometimes a kind of dissolution of the "world" into a condition of shapeless fluidity when all we are conscious of is a substantial movement of currents eddying and interweaving in space. Then, in due course, the new "world" and our new personal form are condensed out of "the waters." (pp. 291-292)

Robert Crookall (1972), a leading compiler of ecstatic experience accounts, has summarized the fluidic sensations reported by experiencers of ecstasy. He found these sensations likened by ecstatic experiencers to a "shining river," "a well of water," "a fringe, which had to be crossed—with sinister fluids," "shadow forms," and "something that is misty."

When Gulliver visited the island of sorcerers, he engaged in the "black art" of necromancy, that is summoning the dead. In that way he conversed with some of humanity's greatest historical personages, real as well as fictional. Contact with the dead is commonly found in NDE-related ecstasy. As a consequence of Gulliver's final voyage abroad, to the land of the Houyhnhnms, there emerged in Gulliver's behavior a character trait frequently found among the survivors of NDEs. Frequently, during the midst of an NDE, the experiencer does not wish to return to his or her physical body and the material universe. Relative to the conditions experienced in this apparent other world, NDErs would often prefer to give up their physical lives rather than return from the ecstatic condition. And once they have returned to physical body consciousness, some NDErs long for the ecstatic condition they have left behind. After a period of time in the Houyhnhnms's utopian realm, Gulliver did not wish to return to the human condition. When he was forced by the Houyhnhnms to leave, Gulliver decided to live as a hermit rather than return to the world of the Yahoos. Only after he was taken aboard a Portuguese merchant ship by force did he return as a captive to live among other human beings. Throughout the remainder of his life Gulliver dreamt of returning to the realm of the Houyhnhnms.

Another facet of the imagery in *Gulliver's Travels* relevant to this paper's theme involves the minuscule and gargantuan proportions encountered, respectively, in Lilliput and Brobdingnab. Swift may have been symbolically examining 18th-century English society and

human nature from afar and then close up. A complementary phenomenological way of looking at these radical alterations in bodily and spatial perspectives is by analogy to ecstatic experiencers' common reports that they experience visual and bodily space distortions during their ecstasies. These distortions sometimes expand and sometimes contract or otherwise radically alter bodily sensations and spatial perspectives (Green, 1968; Crookall, 1972; Mitchell, 1981; Blackmore, 1982; Greene, 1983a). Carlos Alvarado (1982) discussed spatial imagery distortions during ecstatic conditions and noted that imagery distortions also occur during episodes of extrasensory perception (ESP). The seeming relationship between imagery distortions and ESP was documented and discussed by Rene Warcollier (1948), Jan Erhenwald (1978), and Ingo Swann (1987). Elsewhere (Greene, 1983a), I have speculated that ecstatic-experience-related spatial distortions are caused by the experiencers' emerging awareness of the curves and folds in the fabric of space and time as their consciousness ascends into a higher dimensional space.

Submergence into fluidic mediums is not the only reported mode of transition into alternate experiential realities. More commonly reported is the sensation of passing through tunnel-like enclosures. Positioned phenomenologically between the fluidic and tunnel related passageways into the extramundane may be reports of passing through whirlpools and other enclosed spaces lined by rippling, twisting, or twirling boundaries. (Gallup and Proctor, 1982).

### **Down the Tunnel and Through the Looking Glass with Alice**

The tunnel motif was used by Lewis Carroll in *Alice in Wonderland* (1865/1960). Alice, the young heroine of the story, fell down a hole in the ground in pursuit of a white rabbit attired in coat and jacket. More exactly, she floated down a tunnel that was lined with books, tea room china, and other household fineries of late 19th century England. During her descent, she underwent a paradoxical juxtaposing of consciousness states. She "fell asleep" and "dreamt" that she was playing with her kitty on the lawn above the tunnel down which she was at that very moment floating. She "awakened" in the tunnel just in time to land softly upon a pile of leaves at the bottom. The paradox is compounded when we find out at the end of her fantastic journey that she was the whole time dreaming of this fall. After completing her

descent, she entered a bizarre, strangely configured world inhabited by a multitude of weird anthropomorphic creatures.

In addition to tunnel imagery suggestive of an experiential fantastic journey, Alice came across and interacted with fantastic humanoids and other strange creatures. She also shrank to the size of a mouse after drinking the contents of a bottle and later elongated to rather monstrous proportions after consuming a "little cake." As already noted, visual/bodily space distortions are somewhat common during ecstatic experiences. Alice ate a piece of a mushroom in another scene. Her head exploded upwards, with her neck elongating almost instantaneously until her head was positioned high above a grove of trees under which she had been standing. While so positioned, Alice found herself confronting a "mother bird." This bird, wishing to protect her nearby tree-bound nest of eggs from predators, mistook Alice for a snake in search of a meal. After a brief conversation between the two, in which the bird concluded that snakes and little girls must be the same creatures, Alice just as rapidly contracted back into her former position. Such an explosive ascent into the air, along with accompanying aerial views thereby afforded, are sometimes reported by out-of-body experiencers. The major difference here, of course, is that only Alice's head and neck participated in this ascent while, during OBEs, the whole of the out-of-body "body" or locus of perception appears to be involved. In one sense, Alice's elongated neck, stretched very thin during this experience, took on the properties of the "silver cord" sometimes observed by ecstatic experiencers. This cord, according to occult lore, is known for its elasticity and is said to connect the astral and physical bodies.

The consumption of mushrooms is another possible initiatory parallel, in addition to her having fallen asleep to begin her fantastic journey. Mushrooms with hallucinogenic properties have reportedly served as a principal catalyst for experiential fantastic journeys (Kalweit, 1988). Hallucinogenic mushrooms have also evoked radical alterations in an experiencer's perceived bodily size and other radical changes in an experiencer's orientation to physical reality. In addition, Alice met a giant caterpillar (giant, that is, relative to Alice's diminutive dimensions at the time of the meeting) smoking opium while sitting on the mushroom, portions of which she presently consumed to cause her explosive ascent. Opium has also served as a catalyst for experiential fantastic journeys as reported by early 19th century English writers of the Romantic movement (e.g., DeQuincey, 1862/1956).

Carroll's sequel to the wonderland fantasy was entitled *Through the Looking Glass* (1871/1960). This second fantasy contains additional

imagery that parallels the experiential fantastic journey. At the outset of this tale Alice, in effect, became her own reflection or double by passing through her bedroom "looking glass." This looking glass or mirror interestingly became actively fluidic when she pressed up to and then passed through it. This imagery process of passing through one's bedroom mirror to become one's own reflection or double contains imagery that parallels the OBE or initial "separation" stage of ecstasy. Scott Rogo (1978) observed that experimental OBE subjects Stuart Harary and Ingo Swann have both reported that, on occasion, their optical fields during OBEs appear to be aligned in reverse fashion to the optical fields they possess while in their physical bodies. Robert Monroe (1971), as noted by Couliano (1991) in reference to the reversal in Alice's "mirror" vision, has also reported experiencing such an optical reversal during an out-of-body state. When exploring this "mirror room," Alice did not walk but rather glided around as OBEs often report they do during their otherworldly excursions. And finally, we see again an initiatory parallel. Alice underwent this mirror passage during a dream, a common portal for OBEs, as already mentioned.

A 1936 Disney production cartoon adaptation of *Through the Looking Glass* (Disney and Hand, 1936) actually portrayed Mickey Mouse's translucent "spirit form" lifting up into the air out of his sleeping physical body and then passing on through the mirror. An out-of-body scene involving Mickey also occurred in *Fantasia* (Disney and Plumb, 1940) as Mickey, as a sorcerer's apprentice, floated up out of his body during a dream to enter the "higher spheres." There he "imagined" that he consorted with higher cosmic powers, and then awakened back on Earth into a fiasco of his own making. In the 1951 Disney version of *Alice in Wonderland* (Disney, Geronimi, Luske, and Jackson, 1951), which incorporated scenes from both of Carroll's Alice tales, Alice experienced a state of consciousness that was essentially an OBE. While attempting to escape from the Red Queen and her army of playing cards, Alice ran up against a door through which she apparently had to pass to exit Wonderland. She peered through the keyhole to see her "real world" self sleeping peacefully on a verdant lawn, in the shade beneath a large tree.

### Away to Neverland with Peter Pan

James Barrie's *Peter Pan* is a tale of magical flight from a world where children must eventually grow up to the imaginary island of Neverland whose inhabitants never age. Barrie's story contains more

than just a wealth of imagery suggestive of ecstasy. Embedded implicitly in the pages of *Peter Pan*, from beginning to end, is a deep appreciation of the wider ramifications of ecstatic experience. Clearly Barrie appreciated the transcendental import of the human imagination and also appreciated the relationship between dream/visionary experience and the evolution of human consciousness.

Underlying *Peter Pan* is the conflict Barrie saw pitting the child's state of being against that of the adult's. Barrie promoted the commonly held view with uncommon insight and surprising vigor that during the transition from childhood to adulthood the human imagination atrophies until this visionary faculty becomes exhausted or dies. Barrie drew his audience into the life affairs of a middle class English family. We witness the contrast in life values and resulting life priorities displayed by parents and children. Mr. Darling had lost all sensibility for the magical and the fantastic. He drudged through life worrying about his "stocks and shares." The imaginative faculty of his wife, Mrs. Darling, had also lost all power, although, perhaps, she retained a tenuous link to her imagination. The world of imagination was, however, still very much alive in the Darling's three children, Wendy, John, and Michael.

Near the beginning of the tale, Mrs. Darling dozed off in a chair while seeing her three children to bed. She had a dream in which the boundaries separating the "real world" from "Neverland" had grown too thin. She saw that "a strange boy [had] broken through from [Neverland]" (p. 22). Upon waking she noticed that the nursery window had blown open and that a boy had dropped onto the floor, accompanied by a strange light "no bigger than your fist." When the boy realized that she was an adult, he gnashed his teeth at her. She screamed in response and he leapt back out of the window.

Later Peter Pan returned in search of his "shadow," which he had lost in all the commotion surrounding his confrontation with Mrs. Darling. Conveniently, Mr. and Mrs. Darling had just left their house to attend a dinner engagement. Peter waited, hovering in the air outside the children's nursery room window along with his fairy companion, Tinker Bell, until the children's nightlights were extinguished. As soon as darkness covered the children's room, in through the window rushed another light, a light that was "a thousand times brighter than the night lights" (p. 37). This glow was not really a light but rather gave the impression of light by flashing about so quickly. In an instant or two this glow had been through all the drawers in the nursery and rummaged through every pocket in the wardrobe. When it settled it turned out to be Tinker Bell, a female fairy whose curvaceous

bodily form was luminous. In leapt Peter Pan through the window behind her. While rummaging about the room himself, Peter found his shadow but could not get it to stick back onto his body. He broke down and cried. His sobs awakened Wendy. Rather than being afraid of this strange young boy crying on the floor before her, Wendy was only "pleasantly interested" (p. 38).

After some introductory conversation with Peter, Wendy agreed to sew on his shadow. In the conversation that continued along with Wendy's stitching, Peter told of his home in Neverland and how he had come to live there. In return, Wendy told Peter stories as a mother would tell to her children at bedtime. Eventually, Peter talked Wendy into coming back with him to Neverland, so that they might share her nighttime stories with his Neverland companions, the Lost Boys. She said she did not know how to fly and Peter offered to teach her. They then agreed to take along with them her two brothers, John and Michael. But first, the Darling children had to learn to fly. The prescription was simple. Peter explained that "You just think wonderful thoughts and they lift you into the air" (p.51). After the children learned to fly around the room they were prepared to embark upon their journey to Neverland. Peter Pan, Tinker Bell, Wendy, John, and Michael flew out of the Darling children's nursery room window and soared up into the night air. The direction to Neverland, said Peter, was "second [star] to the right and straight ahead to morning" (p.55). After a journey during which the children lost their sense of time, finally they arrived in Neverland. There they met the Lost Boys and engaged in a number of adventures involving pirates, Indians, mermaids, fairies, and other magical beings. Eventually, the Darling children became homesick and, after a victorious last battle against the pirates, they returned to their parents' home.

The imagery Barrie employed in this modern fairy tale clearly resembles the phenomenology of ecstasy. Even conditions conducive to the onset of ecstasy were present in this story; for example, the Darling children entered into the magical world of Peter Pan after their nightlights went out. This may be seen to indicate that the Darling children were descending into sleep. As noted, borderline sleep states sometimes initiate ecstasies. Then the light "a thousand times brighter than the night lights" entered into and illuminated their room. Experiencers of ecstasy sometimes report that the environment they enter upon seemingly shedding their physical bodies is luminous. Even one's bedroom may appear to be luminous when viewed from an out-of-body perspective. Floating through the air inside their bedroom also corresponds to a commonly reported facet in the initial stages of

an OBE. But more provocative yet relative to the theme of the fantastic journey are Peter's directions to Neverland: "second [star] to the right and straight ahead to morning." In effect, these directions involve a passage through darkness into light. Passage through darkness into light as an entrance into the supernatural forms a central part of the literary fantastic journey at least as far back as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Sandars, 1960), originally composed close to four thousand years ago.

Barrie's tale contains numerous other examples of imagery suggestive of the ecstatic condition and of the experiential fantastic journey. He stated that "it is quite impossible to say how time does wear on in Neverland . . ." (p. 101). Experiencers of ecstasy often report that their time sense is greatly altered during their fantastic journeys and that the passage of time becomes difficult if not impossible, to gauge accurately. And as already noted, the inhabitants of Neverland never grow old; that is, they are immortal. Certain of these inhabitants, it has been suggested by Michael Patrick Hearn (1988), may represent souls of the deceased. In his introductory essay on the Peter Pan fairy tale, Hearn observed that Barrie drew upon traditional Celtic fairy lore. The fairies, in Celtic tradition, sometimes spirited away unwanted children to fairy lands located in mysterious islands to the west of Britain. The fairies also escorted souls of the newly deceased away to these same mysterious islands. Barrie may be seen to have drawn upon and combined both variants of this take-away motif, as it pertains to the identity of the Lost Boys. The Lost Boys in one sense, Hearn suggested, were young children who had died after being carelessly dropped out of their baby carriages by thoughtless nannies strolling through the park. Thus, in meeting the Lost Boys, the Darling children may be seen to have come into contact with souls of the dead. As noted, seeming contact with souls of the dead is a common element in experiential fantastic journeys.

### **Swept Up Through the Cyclone with Dorothy**

I shall now address imagery characteristic of ecstasy within L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and consider additional pertinent imagery present in the 1939 film production of this classic American fairy tale (LeRoy and Fleming, 1939). Dorothy Gale, a young orphan girl living with her aunt and uncle, was the heroine in both versions of this story.

In the book version, she traveled in her uprooted farmhouse, along with her little dog Toto, into the sky through the center of a cyclone. During this ascent, Dorothy fell asleep. Dorothy "woke up" to discover that she had been transported into a fantastic world full of lush green vegetation and vibrant rolling green hills. This fantastic land was populated by many strange creatures human to varying degrees, like the dwarfish race of Munchkins, as well as by various anthropomorphic beasts, like the Cowardly Lion, and other living beings created magically out of inanimate materials, like the Scarecrow, or through the use of some sort of fantastic mechanical technology, like the Tin Woodman. Some of these beings, like the Wicked Witch of the West and her army of flying monkeys, possessed powers that would be judged to be supernatural, were Dorothy in their presence "back in Kansas." Dorothy embarked upon a journey toward the luminous Emerald City to seek an audience with the great Wizard of Oz in the hope that he would help her return to Kansas.

Dorothy, as noted, fell asleep on her bed while ascending through the center of the cyclone. Sleep states, we have observed, serve as one of the most common conduits into ecstatic experiences. And passage up through this whirling vortex shares obvious parallels with the tunnel experience, a common component in experiential fantastic journeys. Other aspects of Baum's imagery suggestive of experiential fantastic journeys included the impression of having entered a world of extraordinary beauty and the interaction with assorted fantastic beings. And of the Emerald City, we may note that some experiential fantastic voyagers report having approached or even having entered into luminous cities during their ethereal peregrinations (Moody, 1977).

The movie version of this fairy tale (LeRoy and Fleming, 1939) provides us with additional material to ponder. This version was more than just a translation of the Oz fairy tale from a written story into film. Vital new elements infused the story complicating any effort to interpret the tale clearly. First, Dorothy was much older in the movie version. Rather than being a young child, she was on the verge of adulthood. Dorothy, in this cinema version, was knocked unconscious by a falling window frame and collapsed onto her bed. She did not physically ascend with her house through the center of the cyclone, as in the book; rather this movement took place in her "imagination." Following the cyclone, Dorothy's Aunt Em and Uncle Henry were worried that Dorothy would not regain consciousness. When Dorothy did revive, both of her guardians were immensely relieved. Did the screen writer refashioning this tale for the cinema intend to suggest that this blow to the head propelled Dorothy into an NDE?

Within such a context, the journey to Oz may be looked upon as a passage to a fantastic realm that is timeless, relative to Dorothy's home in turn of the century Kansas. The variety of clothes worn in this strange land, and the range of architecture and other surrounding artifacts present there, would seem to be drawn from numerous separate historical periods upon our earth. From medieval times to early twentieth-century America, it was as if these different historical periods were present all together and interactive with one another in the land of Oz. This commingling of various historical periods into a more expansive present moment in Oz may also be seen to be reflected in the fairy-like appearances and psychological dispositions of the Munchkins. They possessed in a bizarre—even grotesque—mixture, the characteristics of both children and adults. Small in bodily size and large headed, like human children, they were, at the same time, adults, within the context of the realm they inhabited. Yet they possessed many childlike interests illustrated by the existence of such organizations as the "lullaby league" and the "lollipop guild." The "Wicked Witch of the West," in this movie, was gaunt and green in color, a ghoulish appearance that is often associated with corpses. Interestingly, the land of the dead from time immemorial in European lore was located in mysterious islands to the west of Europe. And Dorothy successfully journeyed to and returned from Oz after capturing the broomstick of the Wicked Witch of the West. In Virgil's *Aeneid* (1952), the fantastic voyager Aeneas successfully entered the underworld to visit the land of the dead and returned to the realm of the living because he was in the possession of a tree branch with magical powers—the "golden bough."

Yet, this was not the only possible interpretation interwoven, as if intentionally, into the movie version of the Oz fairy tale. Also present for viewers to ponder was the possibility that Dorothy merely experienced a strange dream. This was the accepted interpretation of her journey by the adult characters in the movie as she revived during the final scene. In such an interpretation, Dorothy returned home, after intending to run away, full of unresolved conflicts about the fate of her beloved dog, Toto. Toto had, just a short time before, escaped the clutches of Elmyra Gulch, the mean-spirited spinster who "owned half the county." For having bitten her on the leg, Miss Gulch wished to take Toto to the sheriff to be destroyed. Dorothy, just prior to arriving home, had conversed with a roadside carnival seer. His insight into human nature went beyond the turban and crystal ball he employed in his act. This insight, derived from his rational intellect rather than from some mysterious psychic force, enabled him to see right through

the naive and impressionable farmgirl. In attempting to persuade Dorothy that her best interests lay in returning home, he realized that a direct, common sense approach might not work. Rather than risk such a failure, he employed the feigned higher authority of the wondrous and the supernatural. He looked into his crystal ball, after deceptively fishing through her bag of belongings to find the personal effects that he would need to astound Dorothy with his clairvoyant powers. Dorothy was so struck by his psychic bamboozlement that she rushed immediately home even as a major storm was stirring.

In the "strange dream" interpretation of Dorothy's journey, Dorothy was struck on the head in the midst of a life crisis. Not only was there the conflict over Toto with Miss Gulch; at a deeper level there was the conflict of self discovery and the painful transition Dorothy was experiencing as she approached womanhood. In her dream/visionary experience, she embarked upon a rite of passage into adulthood. The content of this conflict stemmed from the immediate events in her daily life organized around her ongoing identity crisis. All of this was magnified by the powers of her imagination, given free rein amidst the backdrop of the dream/visionary environment she entered. The personalities of her farmhand friends, Zeke, Hunk, and Hickory, also became magnified in this strange visionary setting. These friends became transformed respectively into the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman. Her images of these farmhands participated with her on her journey of self discovery. The last person to interact with Dorothy before her fantastic journey, the roadside seer, became a powerful Wizard in this bizarre visionary realm. The mean-spirited Miss Gulch, whom Dorothy had already accused of being a "wicked witch," actually became a Wicked Witch in the land of Oz. And upon Dorothy's arrival in Oz, the Witch crushed under Dorothy's house had owned the county where the Munchkins lived in the land of Oz, much as Miss Gulch owned "half the county" in Dorothy's native Kansas.

### **Through the Wardrobe with Lucy, Edward, Peter, and Susan**

Next I shall consider the imagery in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1951), the first volume in C.S. Lewis's classic Narnia series. As this story opened, four children, siblings named Peter, Susan, Edward, and Lucy, had been evacuated from London during the German air raids of World War II. They had taken up residence in the very large country estate of an elderly retired professor, far away from the

ravages of war. The house in this estate was huge, ancient, and full of surprises, and was explored by the children. The youngest girl, Lucy, came upon a wardrobe in one of the rooms of this mysterious mansion. She opened the door of this closet-like enclosure and passed into the darkness, finding herself among old clothes and moth balls. Rummaging through this enclosure with outstretched arms, Lucy expected to momentarily bump into the back of the wardrobe. But she was amazed by the size of this storage space as she walked on and on.

Then she felt something strangely soft, cold, and powdery at her feet. Continuing on, she began to rub up against what appeared to be the branches of fir trees and then spotted a light in the distance. She looked back and could still see the open door of the wardrobe and even partially into the room she had left behind. This gave her the confidence she needed to continue on. It was nighttime and snowing wherever she was, although she knew that it was daytime and summer on the other side of the wardrobe. After a while she found herself nearing the light and saw that it emanated from a lamppost in a clearing surrounded by trees.

Lucy had entered the fantastic realm of Narnia, as she learned from conversing with a faun named Mr. Tumnus, whom she met shortly after entering Narnia. Mr. Tumnus invited Lucy to his cave to warm herself by his fire and to snack on hot tea, sardines, toast, and jelly. After a bit of hesitation, Lucy accepted and off they trudged through the snow to the abode of Mr. Tumnus. Upon arriving, while warming herself by the fireplace, Lucy spotted such volumes on Mr. Tumnus's bookshelf as *Men, Monks and Gamekeepers: A Study in Popular Legend, or Is Man a Myth?* Having visited for some time, Lucy informed her host that she had to return home and began her journey back. When she arrived back in her own world, Lucy rushed off to find her siblings to tell them why she had been gone for so long. When she told them she had been gone for hours they responded that she has only been absent for several minutes. When she spoke of a secret passageway leading into another world, they would not believe her. In near despair, she led them to the wardrobe but alas, it was no longer a magical doorway into another world. She now had to endure the insults of her sister and brothers.

Later, Lucy entered the wardrobe and found her way back to Narnia. Eventually, all four children passed through the wardrobe into this fantastic realm. They engaged in a series of harrowing adventures in which they met various talking animals and mythological creatures. They became engulfed in an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. This struggle, in which Aslan the lion, a Christ figure, eventu-

ally overcame Jadis the witch, a personification of universal evil, reflected Lewis's own Christian world view.

Three elements stand out in this story as important to the present thesis. The first is the long dark passageway of the wardrobe, with a light at the end, connecting the two worlds. Once again we encounter imagery suggestive of the tunnel effect. Of particular interest here are reported cases (Green, 1968, p. 43; Gallup and Proctor, 1982, p. 27) in which ecstatic experiencers described looking back from within the tunnel or from the other end of the tunnel at the physical world they had seemingly left behind. The second is the apparent contact with supernatural beings, such as the Christ-like lion and the evil witch. And the third is the timeless quality of the children's visits to Narnia. No matter how long they had been gone, when they returned to the physical world no earthly time had passed. A sense of timelessness is often ascribed by ecstatic experiencers to their seeming journeys into the beyond (Green, 1968; Hampe, 1979)

### Summary and Appraisal

The fantasy works scrutinized above all involved "make believe" voyages from the world of ordinary reality into alternate fantasy realms and back again, with the exception of *Gulliver's Travels*, in which the voyage was ostensibly to previously unsuspected fantastic parts of our own planet Earth. In *Peter Pan*, the journey was also to a remote island, though in that instance the author made clear that it was an island of the imagination. Just what the "imagination" was, for Barrie, however, remains an unsettled question. The natural laws operating in these other realms varied marginally to dramatically from the natural laws generally presumed to govern the physical universe. During their extraordinary excursions, the protagonists often found themselves in awe and wonder at their bizarre contacts with fantastic beings. After a series of otherworld adventures, the protagonists returned to the world of mundane reality.

Anyone familiar with the developmental sequence and phenomenological content of experiential fantastic journeys will recognize that the above narratives share much in common with such apparent passages into other worlds. The theme of a struggle between good and evil is sometimes present in experiential fantastic journeys, as it was in the tales of Barrie, Baum, and Lewis. While lacking in most modern experiential fantastic journeys, the theme of a struggle between good and evil was quite evident in medieval Christian NDEs (Rose, 1980;

Zaleski, 1987). Not infrequently during experiential fantastic journeys, medieval Christian ecstatic voyagers seemed to pass successively through the outskirts of heaven and then of hell. Alternately, medieval Christian ecstatic voyagers might pass up through the aerial realm of medieval cosmology, said to be infested with demons, until they reached the Lunar sphere. Beyond this sphere lay the heavenly realms of God and Paradise (Rose, 1980; Greene, 1985-86; McDannell and Lang, 1988).

In these six fantasy works we find three modes of other-realm passage that are commonly found within the chronicles of ecstatic experiencers: (1) passage through fluidic mediums; (2) passage through darkness or tunnels toward light; and (3) a process suggestive of consciousness separating from the physical body, such as mirror passage. Images of floating, flying, and levitating in these examples of fantastic literature are also strongly suggestive of the OBE, both visually and kinesthetically. Extrasensory perception, occasionally reported to occur during ecstasies, reveries, and dreams, also occurred in the context of these stories, such as the Wicked Witch's crystal gazing in the Oz fairy tale. Alterations in the time sense of the protagonists in *Peter Pan* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* also correspond to alterations in the time sense of ecstatic voyagers.

Profound alterations not only in a protagonist's time sense but also in his or her sense of space were also depicted in these fantasies. Examples include the varying spatial magnitudes of worlds visited by Gulliver and the series of spatial distortions experienced by Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. As noted, profound spatial distortions are sometimes reported to occur during episodes of ecstasy. Contact with souls of the dead also formed a part of literary fantastic journeys, as exemplified in *Gulliver's Travels*. This same theme, I have argued, was at least implicitly present in *Peter Pan* and in the movie version of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Contact with souls of the dead is also a common theme in the accounts of NDErs. Not infrequently, such reports are even found in the chronicles of OBErs whose journeys occurred in non-near-death related circumstances.

Initiatory parallels also abound linking literary to experiential fantastic journeys. Sleep-related states served as conduits into the fantastic in *Gulliver's Travels*, in both of the Alice tales, in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and in *Peter Pan*. In *Gulliver's Travels* we have an additional possible trigger for ecstasy in the near-drowning Gulliver experienced during his first voyage. This may be seen to have set up a condition for a possible NDE-related entrance into ecstasy. States of extreme isolation have also been known to induce ecstatic experiences,

such as among explorers and pioneers isolated from human contact. Both Richard E. Byrd (Rogo, 1978) and Charles Lindbergh (1953) reported entering ecstatic conditions while suffering from fatigue and removed from human contact. In this regard we may note that in later voyages, Gulliver became marooned on desert islands.

Of particular significance, in my view, is the fact that in the works of Carroll, Barrie, Baum, and Lewis, the fantastic voyagers were children. Common in children is the capacity to become easily absorbed in their imaginations. This capacity of self absorption becomes increasingly rare as human beings mature, at least in our rational Western culture. Adults capable of such absorption are far more likely to experience ecstasy than those who are not (Irwin, 1985). Thus in some sense each of these writers may have realized that there is a profound relationship between the possession of a potent imagination and access to ecstasy. Also of initiatory relevance were various organic substances present in certain of these fantasy works, known to induce ecstasy. In the Alice fantasies we have a "magic mushroom" and an opium-smoking caterpillar. In the Oz fairy tale, Dorothy and her companions fell asleep after breathing the fragrance of poppies.

The parallel structures examined up until this point, however, do not exhaust the commonalities between literary and experiential fantastic journeys. I shall return to examine this question of additional common elements below.

### **Depth Psychology: A Preliminary Discussion**

Before delving into the more esoteric reasons for these parallels, one rather obvious and seemingly natural explanation should be examined: the notion of literary convention. In this view, the authors deliberately drew upon the phenomenology of ecstatic experiences in constructing their imaginary voyages. The cogency of this simple explanation, however, is greatly reduced when we consider how sparse knowledge of ecstasy was until the late 1950s. Even in such early parapsychological classics as F.W.H. Myers's *The Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903) little attention is devoted to analyzing ecstatic experiences. Only since the late 1950s has there been any systematic attempt to decipher the phenomenology of ecstatic experiences, beginning with the pioneering studies of Hornell Hart (1954) and Robert Crookall (1960a, 1960b). Before that time, only in the literature of occultism and mysticism could one find more than scattered references to ecstasy. All six fantasies critiqued in this paper

were published prior to 1951, well before knowledge of ecstasy was widespread. Thus we need to look beyond literary convention for explanation of the parallels noted above.

The human mind is multifaceted in ways that may not be immediately obvious to our ordinary state of consciousness. In addition to the physical world view to which our ordinary consciousness is accustomed, there are, I now propose, numerous other consciousness state perspectives capable of being experienced by ordinary consciousness. Access to these other perspectives, I shall assume, lies beyond the customary reach of our ordinary consciousness. One possible view of these other consciousness state perspectives, to be examined shortly, is that by learning to "move" into them, ordinary consciousness undergoes a process of psychospiritual transformation. In such a process, ordinary consciousness might be transmuting into a condition that could be called extraordinary consciousness. This is, however, only one possible understanding of what takes place during these journeys into the fantastic.

### **Ecstasy as the Illumination of the Human Unconscious**

During ecstasy, I now propose, our ordinary consciousness somehow moves into, or expands to include (and thereby comes to illuminate) levels of the mind of which it ordinarily is unconscious. Ordinary consciousness accomplishes this by somehow extracting its awareness, predominantly if not completely, from its usual sense-mediated focus upon the physical universe. This extraction often involves a reversal of sorts as the experiencer becomes unconscious of the physical body, or at least conscious in a setting distinct from the physical body. To the extent that the authors of classic fantasies consciously experienced ecstasy, I propose, they may have consciously incorporated something of this experience into their literary creations. However, we need not suppose that every author of a classic fantasy work has had conscious experience of ecstasy.

Jonathan Swift, I suspect, may not ever have consciously experienced ecstasy. His attitude toward the mysterious and the unexplained was that of a highly skeptical early 18th-century European rationalist. His Protestant heritage made him especially suspicious of mysticism, which was associated in England at the time with the much-hated Roman Catholic tradition. Some of these authors, then, may have constructed their fantasies by drawing unconsciously upon the con-

tents of the normally hidden mental levels experienced *consciously* during ecstasy.

The human mind possesses a capacity for the unconscious association of ideas during which information filters through from the unconscious into the conscious mind. Having implanted information into the unconscious, during experiments in subliminal perception, hypnosis, and while working with split brain subjects, researchers have successfully retrieved this information by a variety of means (Budzynski, 1986; Kihlstrom, 1984; Hooper and Tersi, 1986). Sometimes the actual information lodged in a subject's unconscious mind is not retrieved, but rather related ideas emerge.

If we make the following assumptions, we can gain some appreciation of how authors with no conscious recollection of ecstasy might still "create" fantastic journeys possessing the parallel structures in question. The capacity to access information present in the unconscious applies not only to that which was implanted there during experimental situations, but also to that which was encoded in the unconscious naturally via sensory input or was inherently present in the unconscious. The point I wish to emphasize is that the selection of imagery with which to construct literary fantastic journeys is not an arbitrary act. These images are based, I propose, upon certain universal or collective mental structures in the human unconscious. Either through conscious recollection of ecstasy or through an unconscious association of ideas, the authors of classic fantasies drew upon the contents of these normally hidden mental levels.

And this, I propose, is why the parallel structures in question do exist. In ecstasy, experiencers consciously apprehend the contours of the mind beyond the customary reach of ordinary consciousness. For the composition of fantastic literature, the authors drew, either consciously through direct experience of ecstasy, or unconsciously through an association of ideas, upon the contents of these same hidden mental levels. When classic fantasies have been reembellished, as in the 1936 Disney cartoon adaptation of *Through the Looking Glass* (Disney and Hand, 1936) and the 1939 film of Baum's fairy tale (Leroy and Fleming, 1939), the reembellishers, I propose, drew upon the same universal or collective mental structures in the unconscious. They were, I suggest, pulling out additional properties of these structures, properties that did not survive the original passage of this unconscious mental content into waking consciousness.

The subject matter under question, I believe, naturally bifurcates into two diametrically opposed metaphysical extensions to this depth psychology. One is an epiphenomenal approach, the other a transcen-

dental approach. In concluding this paper, I will briefly outline these divergent metaphysics and consider several reasons why I personally favor the transcendental approach.

### **An Epiphenomenal View of Human Nature**

While conceding all I have said about the multilevel human psyche, ordinary consciousness, and the human unconscious, the epiphenomenal approach assumes that all mental activity ultimately derives from physical sensory input. All mental activity, be it of the ordinary sense mediated variety or of the ecstatic experience variety, is a reflection, and nothing more, of events in the physical universe transmitted to the mind via the physical senses. Ordinary consciousness focused upon the physical universe, in this view, is that level of mind that most accurately interprets events in the surrounding physical universe. During dreams and other visionary experiences, such as OBEs and NDEs, experiencers are cut off from ordinary perceptual links with the physical universe.

These revelers in the imagination unknowingly engage in elaborately embellished misreadings of sensory stimuli. These stimuli while the experiencers are alive, continuously impact upon their nervous systems, however they may be misconstrued and no matter how biologically close to death such experiencers may be. One of the most sophisticated works supportive of this view of human nature is Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949). More recently psychopharmacologist Ronald Siegel (1980) postulated an epiphenomenal explanation for ecstatic experiences, based upon the assumption that such experiences are caused by dissociative hallucinatory activity in the brain having nothing to do with any afterlife realm. Juan C. Saavedra-Aguilar and Juan S. Gómez-Jeria (1989) proposed a neurobiological model for near-death experiences that developed the epiphenomenal approach in the context of contemporary medical knowledge.

The primary weakness of the epiphenomenal approach, in my view, is that it fails to account adequately for instances of scientific discovery during dream states (Myers, 1903; Ullman, Krippner, and Vaughn, 1973); for experiences of high poetic achievement as the direct consequence of visions, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (Siegel, 1989); or for telepathic dreams (Ullman, Krippner, and Vaughn, 1973) and other space/time anomalies experienced during altered states of consciousness (Broughton, 1991).

## A Transcendental View of Human Nature

The transcendental approach, in one sense, turns the epiphenomenal view on its head. Our sensory experiences of the material universe, in this alternate view, are conceived of as shadowy reflections of a higher transcendental reality. Plato's (1924) allegory of the cave in his *Republic* offered us the first statement of this view in Western philosophy. During ecstatic experiences, in this view, human beings undergo a psychospiritual awakening to their higher selves. Their consciousness focus moves up from the shadowy realm of material reality into the infinitely more substantial realm of the supernatural. I have outlined specifics of such a higher dimensional model of human nature in a number of papers (Greene, 1981, 1983a, 1983b, 1984; Greene and Krippner, 1990). This higher-dimensional approach is grounded in the higher space metaphysics of such thinkers as Charles Hinton (1903), P.D. Ouspensky (1923), John Dunne (1927), Steven McLaughlin (1977, 1979, 1986), Steven Rosen, (1977) and Rudolf Rucker (1977, 1984). Couliano (1991) also proposed that a higher dimensional model of human nature may offer the most comprehensive explanation for otherworld journeys experienced during visionary states of consciousness.

Even the tunnel experience may be looked upon within the context of a transcendental theory of human nature. The "illusion" of passing through a tunnel, in this view, is caused by the participation of consciousness in an acceleration to light velocity. Having attained light speed, the experiencer encompasses a four dimensional or timeless view of the cosmos. Carl Sagan (1980) offered a tantalizing hint of how the four dimensional theory of consciousness may relate not only to the tunnel experience but also to Albert Einstein's relativity theory. In discussing the changes in perception that accompany acceleration to light velocity he observed:

As your speed increases, you begin to see around the corners of passing objects. While you are rigidly facing forward, things that are behind you appear within your forward field of vision. Close to the speed of light, from your point of view, the world looks very odd—ultimately everything is squeezed into a tiny circular window, which stays just ahead of you. (p. 169)

Acceleration toward light velocity, with the view of the universe bunching up before one's front in the shape of a circle, may create the illusion that one is passing through a dark tunnel toward a bright

light. Tunnels are frequently dark and possess circular openings. Could there be a more natural way to interpret an ascent into the "fantastically real"? Steve Straight (1983) developed a tunnel theory based upon these same principles.

### **Conclusion: Ascent into the Fantastic**

Natural ecstasies, be they mystics, poets, OBErs and NDErs, or other inspired individuals, including at least some writers of classic fantasies, may be supernaturally precocious, within the context of this higher space model. In other words, the higher dimensional sensory faculties of these persons have prematurely awakened, to varying degrees. For them, the supernatural has become natural. This leads me to the additional parallels to which I have made reference. As the ecstatic voyage merges into mystical experience, a sense of timelessness and a feeling of a higher order of reality is reported by some ecstatic voyagers. Experiencers of ecstasy often believe that they have gleaned transcendental insights into the underlying nature of the cosmos.

Classic fantasies may also be said to be "timeless." Such stories do not fall into anonymity after a period of fashionability. Rather these fantasies endure through successive generations. This ageless quality, I believe, is present in fantastic literature because this literary genre embodies timeless, archetypal truths that are always relevant to human nature. In other words, not only are the phenomenological structures of ecstasy reflected in the imagery structures of fantastic literature; the transcendental insights of high mystical experience are also implicitly embedded in these writings. This is why, I propose, we unknowingly revere these works as "classic."

Classic works of fantasy, I believe, serve not only as vehicles for readers to travel in imagination temporarily outside the harsh confines of physical reality (Rabkin, 1979). This literary genre serves in addition a higher function. Classic works of fantasy, I believe, seed our psyches for that future time when we truly shall engage in a "flight of the soul"—if not before, then on the demise of our physical bodies. This expansion of consciousness will, I believe, lift us up *through* the theater of the human imagination to emerge on the other side into a higher supernatural reality. The "hypersubstantial" nature of this higher world may transcend our conceptions of the dichotomy between "reality" and "imagination." This is why the supernatural shall, I suggest, always remain a controversial subject among "rational" human beings.

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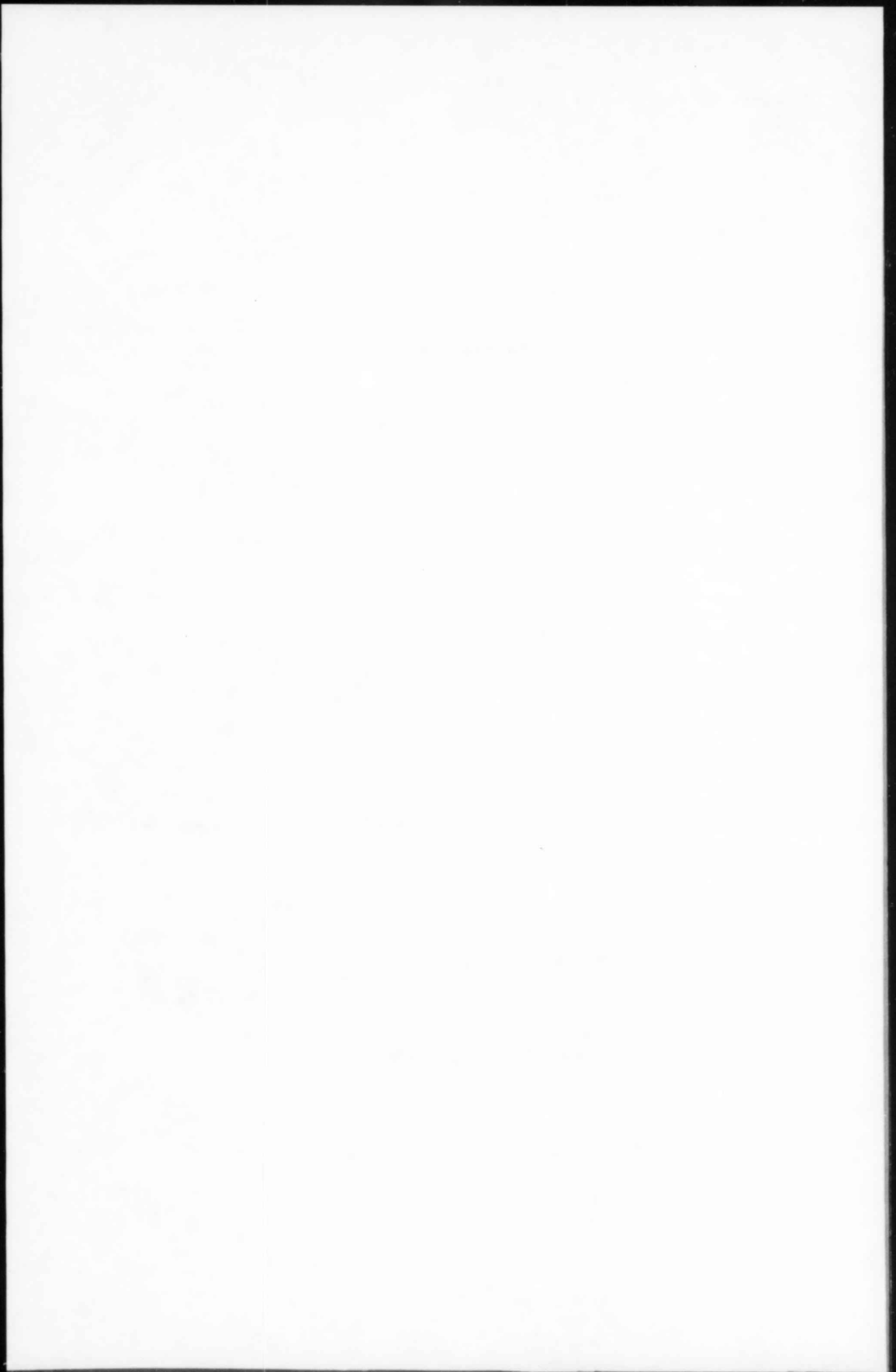
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# The Phantom Leaf Effect and Its Implications for Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences

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**ABSTRACT:** The phantom leaf effect seen in Kirlian photography may help researchers better understand near-death and out-of-body experiences. While the process responsible for the phantom leaf effect is unknown, variations of Rupert Sheldrake's morphogenetic field theory offer three explanations for this phenomenon. Each of these variations has different implications for near-death and out-of-body experiences.

The phantom leaf phenomenon of electrical or Kirlian photography may provide an important clue to the interpretation of both near-death and out-of-body experiences (NDEs and OBEs). In this paper, we explain the phantom leaf effect, explore a possible relationship to humans, and examine this effect's importance for NDEs and OBEs. We describe three processes potentially responsible for the phantom leaf effect and the implications for NDEs and OBEs of each process.

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### Phantom Effects and Implications

The phantom leaf effect is obtained by cutting away up to 50 percent of a leaf and then photographing it in the dark using electricity instead of light: the entire leaf, including the absent portion, appears in the photograph, sometimes in such exquisite detail that the spine, veins, and skin of the absent portion are readily apparent. Kirlian photographs of leaf phantoms have been obtained using many different kinds of leaves, including maples (Krippner and Rubin, 1974), creeping Charlies (Johnson, 1975), potato plants (H. Oldfield, personal communication, autumn, 1990), and sultanas (G. Gay, personal communication, autumn, 1990). Those who have photographed the phenomenon have reported frequencies of from one appearance in several hundred photographs (Johnson, 1975) to 85 appearances in 120 photographs (J. Hubacher, personal communication, autumn, 1989).

The phantom leaf effect is neither a double exposure nor a photographic trick; precautions are routinely taken to ensure that an image cannot occur by mistake. For example, it is standard procedure to cut the leaf immediately *before* it is smoothed onto the emulsion (photographs are by direct contact) to eliminate the possibility that images could result from moisture prints. In the early 1970s, the credibility of the first phantom photographs was jeopardized by the practice of cutting the leaf while on the emulsion, but that practice was abandoned in the mid-1970s.

Is there a related phenomenon in humans? For many years, health-care professionals have noted the occurrence of phantom limb sensations in amputees, in which amputees complain of itching or pain in their absent extremities. Current theories cite exposed and stimulated nerve endings as the cause of these sensations. But some amputees have complained of these sensations for more than 20 years, long after the nerve endings have healed and stimulations have ceased.

There are at least two reports of the photographing of phantom limbs in humans. Jack Worsley (1973) and Joanne Cusack (1989), working in different countries and without prior knowledge of each other, both concluded that phantom limbs can only be photographed during phantom limb pain. While those investigators did not conduct formal studies, and did not monitor or report critical factors such as applied voltage and frequency of appearance, this information implies that, under certain conditions, a photographable phantom effect may exist in humans as well as in plants.

In NDEs and OBEs, individuals often claim that they experience existence separated from the physical body. Since objective evidence of

this out-of-body state is particularly difficult to find, the credibility of the separation hypothesis remains in question. Despite obvious differences in genetic makeup and consciousness between plants and humans, the recorded image of a leaf section where no physical counterpart exists may be visual evidence of a nonphysical dimension, a state of at least partial independence from the body.

Since the phantom half of the leaf may be projected from the remaining physical portion, the assumption cannot necessarily be made that the phantom is distinct and separate from its physical counterpart. Nevertheless, the fact that the photographed image extends beyond the leaf's cut borders indicates existence of something at least partially independent from the physical body. If such projections exist in human beings, they could account for both the realness and the veridicality of NDEs and OBEs.

### **Three Explanations for the Phantom Leaf Effect**

Three hypotheses offer explanations for the phantom leaf effect. Each hypothesis has different ramifications for NDEs and OBEs.

#### *Harmonic Projection from a Cellular Blueprint*

One hypothesis postulates that the phantom section may be projected from a blueprint in the cellular components of the material half of the leaf, perhaps in the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). This is the contention of researchers Harry Oldfield and Roger Coghill (1988):

We think that cells broadcast via the resonance of their DNA paired bases' hydrogen bonds and transmit morphogenetic information to adjacent cells. The Kirlian phantom leaf effect is, therefore, produced by intensifying, rather than destroying, the relevant specific frequencies, and these are reproduced by downward harmonics in the visible light frequency range, and captured on photographic film. If the correct frequency is broadcast by a large number of cells it becomes a strong signal, which bonds the whole cellular structure of an organism together. It embodies a morphogenetic field. (p. 116)

Elsewhere, they state: "Radiation of waves at cellular frequencies, we believe, is how the Kirlian photography can produce the phantom leaf effect" (1988, p. 122)

This interpretation does not permit extrapolation beyond the hydrogen bonds of DNA paired bases. It neither supports nor contradicts the separation hypothesis of NDEs and OBEs. All that can be assumed is that leaves either radiate encoded oscillations, perhaps similar to the amphibian stump currents described by Joseph Vanable, Lester Hearson, and M.E. McGinnis (1983), or that the material blueprint in the cellular matter of the leaf is somehow able to direct applied electrical current into a leaf pattern. We might also speculate that the same process might exist actually or potentially in other living things, including humans.

This theory by itself does not adequately explain NDEs and OBEs. In electrical photography, the additional energy needed to intensify the broadcast of waves at the cellular level, and thus to project the phantom, is generated by currents from the photographic machine. It is possible that changes in the brainwave patterns or surges in the brain's electrical activity could provide the energy to intensify cell broadcasts and induce out-of-body projections in living persons, but what could produce strong electrical emissions in the clinically dead?

Janusz Slawinski (1987) described a "death flash" of electromagnetic radiation as the moment of passing, but it is questionable whether broadcast waves from cells deteriorating and suffering from anoxia or hypercapnea could be strong enough to produce a human phantom, even if reinforced by some type of radiation from cellular breakdown. And if they could do so, it is questionable whether the emission of such radiation could last more than a matter of seconds. What then should be made of vivid NDE accounts such as that of Ricky Bradshaw, who was reported clinically dead for over an hour, during which time he apparently experienced an NDE (Atwater, 1988)?

### *Projection from a Morphogenetic Field*

A second possible explanation of phantom phenomena assumes that there is something that acts as a blueprint for the DNA itself, channeling the molecules of genetic material into their proper positions and directing the growth of the plant from beginning to end. Rupert Sheldrake (1981) posited the existence of such an underlying multidimensional form in his theory of morphogenetic fields:

The morphogenetic germ is part of the system-to-be. . . . The field is not yet "occupied" or "filled out"; it contains the *virtual form* of the

final system, which is actualized only when all its material parts have taken up their appropriate places. (p. 76)

By morphic resonance the form of a system, including its characteristic internal structure and vibrational frequencies, becomes *present* to a subsequent system . . . *superimposes* itself on the latter. (p. 96)

In the case of phantom leaves, such a morphogenetic form may underlie the entire plant, or it could be a "germ" of spatial coordinates and polarities that allows the projection of the developing plant, much the way the indistinct pattern in the film beyond a hologram creates the unfolded three-dimensional image. The interpretation of the field as a germ of spatial coordinates may be closer to Sheldrake's intention: "Morphogenetic fields in general are not precisely defined, but are given by probability distributions. . . . The structures of morphogenetic fields will henceforth be referred to as probability structures" (1981, p. 83).

Physicist David Bohm (1980) hinted at the existence of morphogenetic germs in his explanation of the quantum properties of the electron:

The *form* of the quantum potential can dominate . . . Information contained within quantum potential will determine the outcome of the quantum process. Indeed, it is useful to extend this idea to what is called *active* information. The basic idea of active information is that a form, having very little energy, enters into and directs a much greater energy. (p. 93)

If Sheldrake's theory is correct, the phantom leaf effect may be produced by a spatial blueprint or seed form that momentarily translates applied electrical currents into a partial projection of a leaf, as under different circumstances it might channel atoms and molecules into the developing plant. This preexisting morphogenetic form would be capable of sustained independence from its material product. Applied to NDEs and OBEs, this hypothesis suggests separability of a formative structure, with all the potential capabilities of the manifested entity.

### *Combined Morphogenetic Field-Harmonics Hypothesis*

A third possible explanation of the phantom leaf effect combines Sheldrake's idea of a preexisting form with the harmonics theory of Oldfield and Coghill. In this interpretation, the preexisting mor-

phogenetic field incites the resonance of those DNA paired bases' hydrogen bonds by which cells broadcast their specific frequencies. The paired bases' hydrogen bonds serve as organic transistors that tune in to and project the morphogenetic frequency. If cell resonances are programmed to span out inches or feet away from the plant, they could create an electromagnetic field or other wave pattern that releases encoded information as electrical currents are applied, analogous to the illumination of an interference pattern by a laser beam. This hypothesis incorporates the multidimensionality of Sheldrake's theory with Oldfield's mechanisms by which field forms could incite matter. As in Sheldrake's theory by itself, in this combined hypothesis the preexisting structure would be capable of independence from the physical body.

The morphogenetic theory, then, that offers the most comprehensive interpretation of phantom leaf phenomena also accounts for separability, and therefore of veridicality, in NDEs and OBEs. Furthermore, the curving epigenetic landscape that Sheldrake indicated may be associated with the underlying morphogenetic form could allow for a multidimensionality as described by Gordon Greene (1983), Hornell Hart (1953), and Austin Farrer (1965). Many of the strange perceptual effects associated with OBEs and NDEs make sense in that context; the dynamic curvature of four-dimensional space could explain, for example, the 360-degree vision, ability to see around corners, and sensation of having a spherical or balloon-like body sometimes reported in OBEs and NDEs.

Kenneth Ring (1980) wrote that the NDE could be explained by an assimilation of the holographic paradigm of Bohm and Karl Pribram into a parapsychological framework: "In my view, these two components together can furnish an account of virtually every aspect of the core experience" (p. 220). Ring's parapsychological-holographic model is compatible with the morphogenetic interpretation of phantom phenomena.

The holographic paradigm is based on interconnected dimensional layers that Bohm called the universal matrix, out of which frequencies are projected into three-dimensional entities. The morphogenetic theory also presents a multidimensionality that projects a three-dimensional form through the effects of morphic resonance. Indeed, Bohm described reality as an enfoldment, or series of everpresent existences or enfolded similar ensembles: "There's a natural sequence like this series of Chinese boxes within boxes. And the present moment might be called the box which contains all these previous moments as its content" (Bohm and Weber, 1978, p. 45).

This enfoldment concept is reminiscent of the leaf form under the leaf, the phantom beyond the material counterpart. In fact, Sheldrake (1988) quoted Bohm as making that precise point about the enfoldment process: "Past forms would tend to be repeated or replicated in the present, and that is very similar to what Sheldrake calls a morphogenetic field and morphic resonance" (p. 305). Thus both Bohm and Sheldrake have noted the connection between their respective theories; if the morphogenetic theory helps explain phantom phenomena, then so may the holographic theory as well.

### Conclusion

The phantom leaf effect may be the closest thing we have to recorded visual evidence of nonphysical existence. By studying phantom phenomena, we may come closer to understanding human out-of-body and near-death experiences, and closer to understanding what happens at the moment of death. Whatever causes phantom leaf effects may also be involved in out-of-body projections of the NDE. We argue for considering morphogenetic fields as a factor in both phenomena.

Of course, the concept of morphogenetic fields is still speculative, and we have no device for detecting them. However, despite their unproven existence, many natural occurrences suggest their presence. The very fact of phantom leaves implies some kind of nonmaterial field-like structure reproducible in plants. As for the phantom leaves, there have been few attempts to define their essence, and the phantom effect is reproducible only after many trials and not always on the same coordinates. While both the phantom leaf effect and the morphogenetic field hypothesis remain open to question, they seem mutually supportive. We suggest that further research into phantom phenomena, in the light of morphogenetic field theory, may yield observations relevant to our understanding of life and the moment of death.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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**Whole in One: The Near-Death Experience and the Ethic of Interconnectedness**, by David Lorimer. London, England: Arkana, 1990, 340 pp, £6.99 (Distributed in the United States by Viking Penguin, \$9.95).

A friend of mine who had had a near-death experience (NDE) once described an incident from his life review this way: As a youth, he had had an uncontrollable temper, and one day it really got him into trouble. He had been driving his car rather fast and somewhat recklessly through town and nearly hit a pedestrian. Angry words were exchanged, soon followed by blows, and my NDEr friend eventually pummeled his victim into unconsciousness and left him lying in the middle of the street. Shortly afterward, overtaken by remorse, he reported the incident to the local police and the beaten man was spared any further harm.

During my friend's life review, this encounter was replayed from a dual perspective. From one, he found himself as if in a high building overlooking the street and simply witnessed, like an elevated spectator, the fight taking place below. But from the other perspective, my friend was again *involved* in the fight. However, this time he found himself in the role of *the other party*, and experienced each blow—thirty-two in all, he said—before collapsing unconscious on the street.

It is this feature of the life review—the empathic identification with others—so often reported by NDErs, that is the theoretical basis for

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David Lorimer's brilliant and inspiring new study of the NDE and its implications for a postmodern ethics. Lorimer, as many readers of this Journal will know, is not only the author of a previous book on the survival issue (Lorimer, 1984), but has long been the Chairman of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) in England, and one of the most prominent and eloquent speakers on NDEs at many international conferences. And with this book, which will surely be recognized as an enduring contribution to the field of near-death studies, he has clearly emerged as one of the leading and most searching thinkers on the moral and spiritual aspects of NDEs and mystical experiences generally.

What Lorimer attempts to show in this book is how the essence of both the life review specifically and the NDE as a whole provides a powerful experiential basis for a moral order based on the principle of what he has called "empathic resonance." By this term, he means the direct perception of an underlying web of interconnectedness and interdependence among human beings, and indeed all life. In the life review, for example (and Lorimer makes a distinction between the panoramic memory aspect, which is little more than a holographic show of memory-images, and the life review proper, which induces a nonjudgmental but still moral assessment of one's life), one sees with both compassionate and empathic understanding how one's actions, and even one's thoughts and feelings, have affected others.

The form in which this information is processed, however, as in my opening example, makes it clear to the experiencer that we are all interconnected, and one sees immediately and intuitively that the Golden Rule is not merely a prescription for moral conduct; it is simply and purely *the way it is*. Similarly, the ego-shattering effect of the NDE itself, which reveals the illusion of a separate ego by inducing an unforgettable experience of cosmic unity, leads in Lorimer's own words "to a conscious realization of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all existence and therefore an empathic resonance with all phenomena" (p. 91).

From even this briefest of exposures to the core of Lorimer's theoretical ideas, you can see that what he is about in this book is to articulate a moral frame of reference based on the holistic perspective that has emerged from the last two decades of consciousness research generally. For example, the now widely known writings of such veteran "New Paradigm" architects as Stanislav Grof (1985) and Fritjof Capra (1982), as well as more recent theorists such as Larry Dossey (1989), Michael Talbot (1991), and Chris Bache (1991), have helped us to see that the old mechanistic and materialistic basis of science is beginning to erode

in the face of the challenges presented by new findings in physics, biology, medicine, psychology, and parapsychology, as well as near-death studies.

Accordingly, new perspectives of holism, such as Dossey's emphasis on nonlocality theory or Talbot's on the holographic paradigm, have come to the fore precisely because they give us a conceptual framework in terms of which phenomena such as NDEs make sense and no longer have to be arrogantly dismissed or relegated to the wastebasket status of "anomalous experiences." Lorimer is clearly sympathetic to these developments and aligns himself with this "New Paradigm" thinking; indeed, he has already established his credentials as an effective champion of these views. But the special contribution he makes in this new book is to take these ideas, along with the findings of near-death research, and show clearly where they lead when they are applied to questions of the moral order.

In this respect, however, though Lorimer's contribution here is by far the most thoughtful and carefully argued, as well as the most scholarly, it is not without its precedents even within the field of near-death studies. The late sociologist Charles Flynn, for example, had developed similar ideas in his early articles on NDEs (Flynn, 1982, 1984), and, like Lorimer, gave pride of place in his thinking on the moral implications of NDEs to the life review. In his book *After the Beyond* (Flynn, 1986), he addressed these issues again, and more deeply (see, for example, Chapters 5, 10, and 11), and in ways very reminiscent of Lorimer's own argument.

Rosalie Newsome, in her work on moral development and NDEs (Newsome, 1988), has also broached these concerns within a holistic perspective. It is a little surprising to me, in fact, that Lorimer, whose knowledge of the near-death literature is as vast as anyone else's and whose bibliography for this book exceeds fifteen pages, did not cite this work, especially Flynn's (although he once mentions his name in passing), since it is so germane to the heart of his thesis.

This, however, is a minor omission in light of the enormous range of findings, case history materials, and historical information that Lorimer incorporates into his book and marshals so convincingly on behalf of the ideas about the emerging moral order he offers in *Whole in One*. To give you a brief idea of these contents, let me provide something of an overview of the book itself.

Lorimer begins with an introductory discussion of the life review in the context of the NDE and continues in the next chapter with a similar discussion from the standpoint of such experiences as they appear in the literature dealing with postmortem states of conscious-

ness. In his survey here, he draws not only on "channelled" materials, but also on the writings of such celebrated spiritual adepts as Emanuel Swedenborg, Rudolf Steiner, and Paul Brunton. The fit between the findings from near-death research and purported postmortem experiences is obvious and impressive, and sets the stage for the next chapter on empathic resonance, where Lorimer presents a full discussion of the unitive and transformative aspects of the NDE.

The fourth chapter marks a seemingly abrupt turning point—although again the findings of near-death research really do anticipate it—into the nature of the moral order suggested by reincarnation and its usual correlative, karma. And here the book will indeed take a perhaps unexpected course for some readers, as the next few chapters present essentially an extended discussion of the historical development of afterlife notions and the moral order that each successive afterlife perspective implies.

It is in these chapters especially that Lorimer shows both his erudition and his ability lucidly to summarize large and complex chunks of materials as he considers preliterate, ancient, Hebraic, early and medieval Christian, and more modern conceptions of the nature of the afterlife, ending with the decline of such views with the rise of humanistic and secular thinking in the eighteenth century. In the last chapter, however, Lorimer adroitly links the preceding historical materials with his earlier ideas on empathic resonance and in a moving and passionate conclusion, based on systems theory and other holistic ideas, becomes an eloquent spokesman for a postmodern ethical viewpoint he feels is emerging in our time and with whose energies of love and wholeness he exhorts us all to align ourselves.

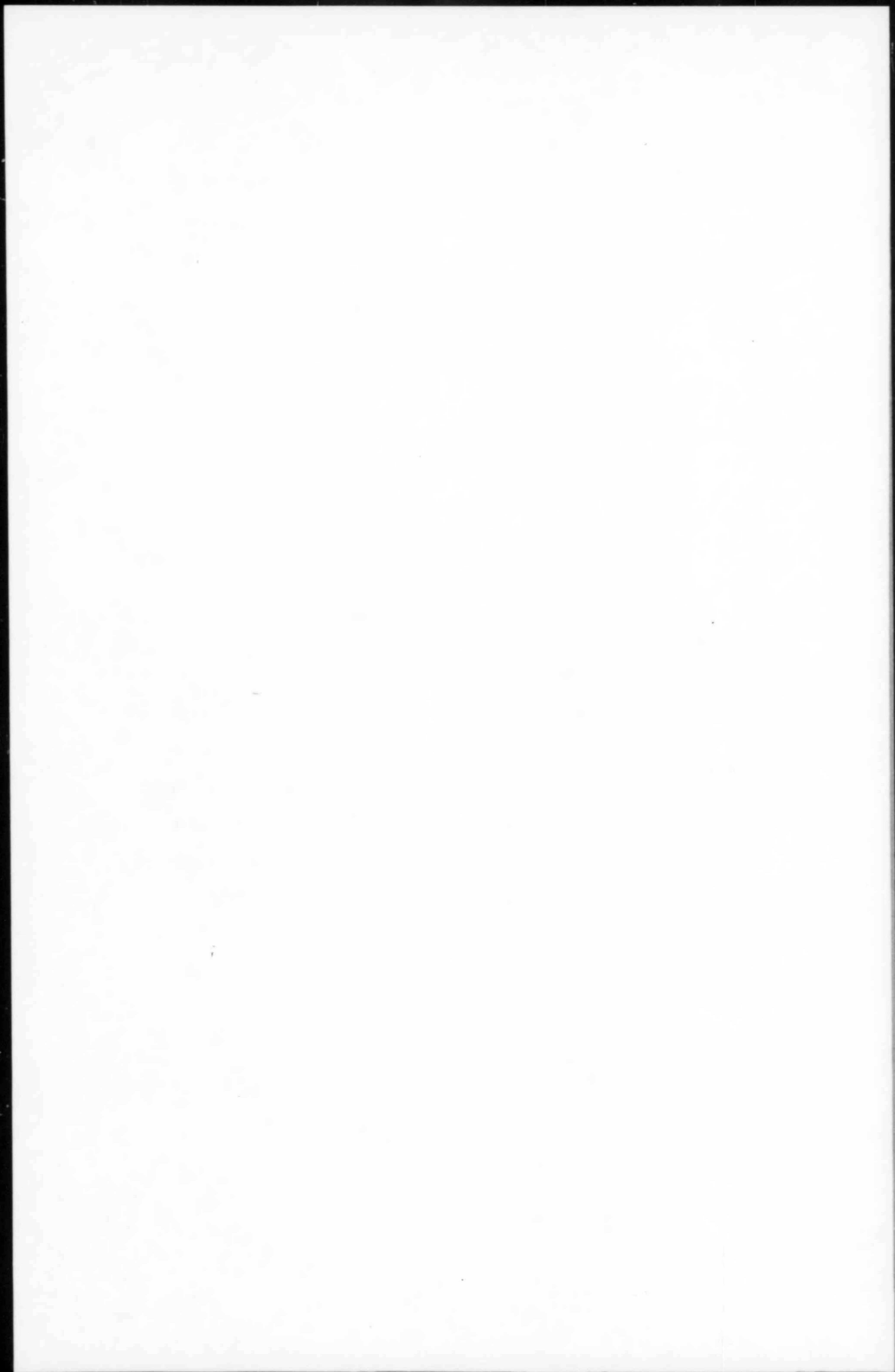
My synopsis of Lorimer's book, I regret to say, fails utterly to convey the wealth of ideas and penetrating insights that make reading *Whole in One* such a stimulating and rewarding experience, both intellectually and spiritually. Among the many jewels of this book, for example, are Lorimer's frequent samplings from the writings or conversations of several spiritual authorities whose works are unjustly neglected or otherwise little known here in the West. Here I am thinking especially of some of Lorimer's own favorites, such as the Bulgarian master Peter Deunov, the Cypriot sage and healer Daskalos, and that still towering but somewhat remote spiritual giant Albert Schweitzer, to whose celebrated concept "reverence for life" (interestingly also mentioned in Flynn's book) Lorimer gives a central place in his own ethical thought. It is one of the many virtues of this book that the author will lead at least some of his readers back to the work of these and some of the other spiritual figures whom he cites in

the course of advancing his personal thesis concerning the coming moral order.

Perhaps I have said enough, however, to induce you to take a look at this book and to ponder for yourself the merits of the vision Lorimer so compellingly (at least in my view) presents. In my opinion, it would be time and money well spent, and I therefore urge any reader who has a serious interest in NDEs and ethical issues to acquire a copy forthwith. *Whole in One* is probably the most thoughtful and important book to appear in our field since Carol Zaleski's *Otherworld Journeys* (1987), a book that also deals with similar issues though from a different point of view, and it deserves to be widely known and much praised.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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**What Survives? Contemporary Explorations of Life After Death,** edited by Gary Doore. Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1990, 287 pp, \$12.95(pb)

Just behind the current fascination with the near-death experience (NDE) is the even greater, perennial fascination with the question of whether we survive the death of the physical body, and if so, in what manner. *What Survives?* is a comprehensive, highly stimulating examination of the scientific, religious, psychological, and philosophical aspects of life after death. The contributors are among the leading lights in the fields of parapsychology and/or transpersonal psychology, and all but one of the articles (by Rupert Sheldrake) were expressly written for this anthology.

Although I expected heated debate over the likelihood of survival *per se*, the implicit assumption of virtually all the contributors to *What Survives?* is in the affirmative. That is, they would pretty much unanimously agree with Colin Wilson, in his conclusion to the book's opening paper, "I now feel perfectly comfortable about acknowledging that I have come to accept the notion of life after death as a virtual certainty" (p. 21). In a sense, much of the book is a polemic, directed against the skeptic in all of us, arguing for the reasonableness of the survival hypothesis. After that question has been "cleared up," the precise nature of survival is examined, although, somewhat disappointingly, not all the writers actually explore the "what survives" issue.

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The book is divided into four sections. The first, *The Evidence for Survival*, looks at a variety of types of empirical research that lend plausibility to the idea of life after death: Wilson writes engagingly on his conversion from skeptic to believer, with a digression on poltergeists (which he thinks are true discarnate entities!) along the way. Pioneering transpersonal therapist Stanislav Grof provides evidence from his LSD and holotropic research, focusing particularly on out-of-body experiences, astral phenomena, and memories of previous incarnations. The reincarnation research of Ian Stevenson is lucidly discussed by Robert Almeder, who convincingly refutes the alternative hypotheses of fraud, clairvoyance, and subconscious impersonation. After reading Almeder's article, reincarnation seemed like a highly plausible and parsimonious explanation indeed! Arthur Berger's article on the history of attempts to construct foolproof means for testing the validity of communications from the dead is somewhat overly technical, but his project is an interesting one. He notes, too, that the telepathic qualities of the (deceased) sender seem to be at least as important as those of the receiver.

A collaboration between F. Gordon Greene and Stanley Krippner on panoramic visions, the familiar "life review" of NDEs, highlights this section. The details of the panoramic vision, including "forward" or precognitive vision, are presented, and three different types of theory elucidated. The authors then proffer their own theory, reminiscent of P.D. Ouspensky's conceptualization of time, which involves a temporal "spatialization" into a four-dimensional universe during NDEs and related phenomena. This proposal is an ingenious attempt to explain the otherwise "impossible" simultaneity of experience during panoramic visions. Somewhat disconcerting, though, was the authors' concluding section on the conundrums related to the judgment of the "soul" and the paradox of free will. Rather than offer simple answers, they leave the reader swimming alone in rather profound spiritual waters! Finally, the late Scott Rogo contributes a chapter on spontaneous contact with deceased loved ones, apparently a surprisingly common occurrence. In sum, the articles in Section One present a highly convincing case for the probability of survival, contact between living and "dead," and even reincarnation.

Section Two, *The Challenge of Materialism*, is philosophically rather than scientifically oriented. David Lorimer contrasts the predominant Western philosophy, namely nonpurposive, amoral scientific materialism, which states that consciousness is an epiphenomenon of brain, with the antinomian view first promulgated by F.C.S. Schiller, Will-

iam James, and Henri Bergson. This rival philosophical view, the "transmissive" theory of mind, contends that although consciousness is transmitted *via* the brain, it is *not* produced *by* the brain as materialism believes. Somewhat frustratingly, the article ends rather abruptly after the delineation of this radical viewpoint.

Along somewhat similar lines, Sheldrake's essay debates the idea that memories are stored in the brain. Rather, he contends, memory is a resonance to invisible morphogenetic fields, one's own (as in memory), or others' (as in telepathy). Sheldrake only briefly touches on the survival question, but maintains that survival is at least consistent with his theory of morphic resonance.

Perhaps the most exciting essay in the entire anthology is Mark Woodhouse's elegant *tour de force*, "Beyond Dualism and Materialism: A New Model of Survival." Woodhouse proposes a metaphysical model uniting energy (objectively) and consciousness (subjectively) into a hierarchical monism. In other words, all levels of the great Chain of Being, from matter to spirit, are viewed as manifestations of differences in degree (*not kind*) of energy/consciousness. More to the point of the book, he cogently demonstrates that both materialism and dualism—the view that a completely nonmaterial soul may "inhabit" a physical body—are incompatible with survival, whereas energy monism easily accommodates survival within its purview. Woodhouse illuminates a number of subtle issues derived from his model: interdimensional penetration and apparitions, whether an "astral body" might conceivably be photographable, and the ultimate permanence or impermanence of the individual personality. He ends with some mind-boggling speculation, in the manner of NDErs' prophetic visions, on the imminent emergence of a large-scale shift in the evolution of humanity up the hierarchy of energy/consciousness.

Well-known parapsychologist and cartographer of consciousness Charles Tart completes Section Two. Tart first reveals the flaws of materialism by citing the massive evidence of parapsychology, then goes on to explain why survival research has gone "out of fashion." The most intriguing point Tart makes is that, given what we know about the plurality (*not unity!*) of consciousness, when we die we will most likely be in a state of consciousness quite *different* from our "normal" consciousness. "What survives" the physical body is likely to be an altered form of consciousness, reminiscent, in its fluidity, of dreaming. Furthermore, the finding that much knowledge is state-specific, i.e., nearly impossible to comprehend from the vantage point of a second, different, state of consciousness, explains in part the difficulty NDErs

have first, remembering the details of what they have learned, and second, communicating what they can remember with others who are limited to "ordinary" states of consciousness.

Part Three, *Death and Beyond in the Perennial Philosophy*, looks at the afterdeath state from the point of view of various religious traditions. Ram Dass gives a general introduction to Yogic and Buddhist views of death and the importance of the proper attitude and thoughts at the moment of death. Georg Feuerstein follows with an analysis of the belief in immortality in India. Perhaps due to experimentation with a psychedelic referred to as soma, the belief in an afterlife was pretty much taken as a given in early Vedic culture. The goal of existence was not endless survival, however, but *freedom from* the cycle of death and rebirth, i.e., enlightenment. Feuerstein carefully distinguishes several views of liberation, concluding that Tantrism represents the flower of Indian thought. Unlike the more ascetic Indian traditions, Tantrism's emphasis is on immanence, i.e., the notion that the Divine can be found here in the illusory world of *samsara*, not just in the transcendence of *nirvana*. Feuerstein's article goes well beyond the issue of what survives, however, and may be a bit abstruse for the average reader, despite his considerable skill as a writer.

Squarely addressing the question "What survives?" is transpersonal theoretician Ken Wilber's essay on the stages of dying outlined in Tibetan Buddhism. As usual, Wilber is erudite, yet incisive. He first clarifies exactly what reincarnates (*not* the mind or personality!) and then carefully examines about a dozen stages in the dying, death, and rebirth process. Most pertinent is his discussion of the NDE in the light of the Tibetan tradition. Wilber cautions first that the light seen in the NDE may not be "exactly the highest level" (p. 187). More disturbing, though, is his caveat that the NDE is only the "fun" side of dying, which can be followed by "the bardo [after death] ordeal—a real nightmare unless one is very familiar with these states through meditation" (p. 188). The remainder of the article compares the experiences of meditation (quite literally) with the dying process. Although the subsequent article, by Tibetan lama Sogyal Rinpoche, is nicely written and quite thoughtful, it covers much the same ground as Wilber's paper. An article by a representative of a Western religious or esoteric (e.g., Anthroposophical) tradition would have been welcome here. Such a conspicuous absence is one of the book's few weaknesses.

Section Three concludes with an extremely insightful and artfully written study by well-known near-death researcher and theoretician Kenneth Ring. Here Ring pushes beyond the NDE, focusing on the those who have truly "mastered death," i.e., practitioners of shaman-

ism. From shamans and other visionaries, we learn of the existence of an ontologically real "imaginal" (*not imaginary*) world, which is normally entered at physical death, but which can be encountered during life as well (as occurs voluntarily by the shaman and inadvertently during the NDE). The imaginal world is not some exotic alien geography, however; instead it is best viewed, Ring maintains, as the landscape of our own soul, an outward projection of our inner self. Ring cautions that a complacent waiting for a glorious future, basking in the love of an unconditionally accepting Being of Light, may easily "blind us to the rest of the imaginal journey to follow" (p. 214). And there is a vital lesson here, for "though we *meet* our soul in 'the next world,' we *make* it in this one" (p. 213). As does Wilber, Ring draws serious implications for how to live *before* death.

Section Four returns to earth, focusing on various psychological issues surrounding death, dying, and the afterlife. Stephen Levine, in a somewhat meandering fashion, explores death and the dying process from the perspective of the Buddhist Vipassana (insight) meditative tradition. Amidst a number of arresting anecdotes, Levine draws attention to the ultimate purpose of living and dying: overcoming the illusion of separateness. In Levine's view, death presents itself not merely as a potentially glorious experience, as reported in most NDEs, but as an opportunity *to dissolve the individuality of the experiencer* itself and become one with the Light.

Quite unique is the next chapter, a collaboration between Lisa Ann Mertz and Lorin Smith, a shaman among the Kashaya Pomo tribe in California. Most of the article consists of quotes by Smith on his work, not on earth, but in the afterlife world, where he is establishing a "vocation" as a teacher for prematurely deceased adolescents. This fascinating account might have worked better as a companion piece to Ring's more theoretical article on shamanism, especially since the imaginal landscape described by Smith depicts a more "objective" geography than one would have expected from reading Ring's paper.

Possibly the most original essay in the entire compendium is philosopher Michael Grosso's startlingly titled "The Fear of Life After Death." Turning the tables on the materialist objection that people are strongly motivated to *believe* in survival, Grosso advances the idea that materialists are equally as motivated to *disbelieve* in life after death! For example, despite the contention of psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank that belief in an afterlife is a result of childish wish fulfillment and/or narcissism, the anthropological record shows that "Quite to the contrary, the facts indicate that the first people feared not extinction, but life after death; they feared not death,

but the [spirits of the] dead" (p. 242). Grosso enumerates at least a half dozen other reasons why people today might fear life after death, e.g., fear of judgment or karmic retribution, fear of helplessness in a strange environment, and even fear of enlightenment. Equally eye-opening is his evolutionary paradigm of survival, which holds that the afterlife *itself* is emerging or evolving! Grosso believes that the growing number of other-world experiences, such as NDEs, may modify nature itself and create, through Sheldrakian morphogenetic fields, "a new form of life after life" (p. 252). More, one major aspect of this evolution is taking place, paradoxically enough, on earth itself as the human species gradually undergoes what Grosso terms "resurrection," a "transform[ation] into a higher type of spiritual body" (p. 251), ultimately leading (potentially) to the creation of a Paradise on earth. There is much more, but Grosso's rich and subtle exposition defies easy synopsis.

David Feinstein next explores our "personal mythologies" of death, both secular and spiritual, and their often subliminal effects on our lives. Unfortunately most of this article concerns an elaborate technique for encountering one's myths; while this is undoubtedly effective in a live workshop setting, the "how to" approach does not gel terribly well with the rest of the anthology.

The final essay in Section Four, by the book's editor, Gary Doore, illustrates the similarities, even identities, between shamanism, yogic mysticism, and some contemporary near-equivalents, such as the NDE. All such transcendent experiences are means of "practicing *philosophia* in the original Socratic sense of 'preparation for death'" (p. 271). The NDE may be a harbinger, Doore speculates, of the democratization of such "preparation for death," necessitated by the perils inherent in our destructive Western lifestyle. The urgency of a global transformation of consciousness recurs frequently throughout the anthology.

Concluding the book is editor Doore's jewel of an epilogue, which raises the fundamental question, "Given that we cannot prove (nor disprove) the reality of life after death, is there any philosophical justification for belief in an afterlife?" Doore answers by focusing on the pragmatic *consequences* of survivalism as contrasted with agnosticism or materialism. Since belief in an afterlife is far more likely to engender spiritual meaning, cosmic purpose, and moral order, it is clearly preferable to the alternative hypotheses. I, for one, am in complete agreement.

*What Survives* embraces far more than "just" life after death, viz., orientation to the process of dying, near-death experience, spiritual

evolution, parapsychological phenomena, reincarnation, shamanism, mysticism, and meditation. Most of all it reveals how understanding death and its transcendence can change the meaning of life and subsequently how we live, both individually and collectively. Anyone interested in such issues—and that includes all of us—will find *What Survives* compelling and immensely profitable reading.



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