

Exceptional Human Experience

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the seventh chapter, "Explanations," Moody discusses why he considers NDEs to be spiritual experiences and then describes the many attempts to explain NDEs, including the birth experience hypothesis, carbon dioxide overload, hallucination, fantasy, wish fulfillment, and the collective unconscious. In the "Conclusion," he expresses his conviction that NDEs provide evidence of life after life. The bibliography, with paragraph-length annotations, consists of research reports that helped him to form his "knowledge and opinion on the subject of near-death experience" (p. 157). - R.A.W.

03991. Perry, Paul. Brushes with death. *Psychology Today*, 1988 (Sep), 22(9), 14-17. 2 illus

Paul Perry presents a popular review of NDE research that touches on the work of Raymond Moody, Michael Sabom, and Melvin Morse, with the emphasis on Moody. *The Light Beyond* is described as Moody's last book on NDEs. His next work supposedly will be on past-life regression. Brief descriptions of 9 traits associated with NDEs are given. Paul Kurtz criticizes NDEs by pointing to confusion in the definition of death, the fact that evidence is anecdotal, and that there are several physiological explanations for NDEs, as there are for the related OBE. - R.A.W.

SURVEYS

03992. Basterfield, Keith. Near-death experiences: An Australian survey. *Australian Institute of Psychic Research (AIPR) Bulletin*, 1986 (Feb), No. 9, 1-4. 2 illus; 10 refs; 1 questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to 26 Australians who had reported a near-death experience (NDE). The 12 returned questionnaires reveal that Australian NDEs are very similar to those reported overseas. This adds to the legitimacy of the experience, and demonstrates the need for more scientific studies. - DA

03993. Holden, Janice Miner. Unexpected findings in a study of visual perception during the naturalistic near-death out-of-body experience. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 1989 (Spr), 7(3), 155-163. 3 figs; 12 refs

A study [03246] of visual perception during the naturalistic near-death out-of-body experience (nND OBE), that aspect of the NDE in which the experiencer seems to view normal physical surroundings from a vantage point outside the physical body, yielded some unexpected findings that contradicted or augmented previous research. The majority of respondents were able to estimate the duration of the nND OBE; a sizable proportion reported delay of recall of the nND OBE; and the vast majority reported receptivity to subsequent verification of nND OBE perceptions. Each of these findings is discussed relative to previous research and analyzed in light of the limitations of the current study. Implications for further research are discussed. - DA

03994. Kellehear, Allan, and Heaven, Patrick. Community attitudes toward near-death experiences: An Australian study. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 1989 (Spr), 7(3), 165-172. 16 refs; 3 tables

In an Australian survey of community attitudes toward near-death experiences (NDEs), 173 respondents were asked to read a hypothetical description of an NDE and to select from a range of explanations that might approximate their own. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents believed the NDE was evidence of life after death, while less than 2 percent believed the NDE was a sign of mental illness. Women, younger persons, and those who professed a belief in life after death were more likely to react positively to

the NDE described. - DA

THEORETICAL

03995. Basterfield, Keith. The cause of near-death experiences: A review. *Australian Institute of Psychic Research (AIPR) Bulletin*, 1985 (Jan/Feb), No. 5, 10-14. 35 refs

This article surveys several proposed explanations of near-death experiences (NDEs); mundane, such as dream-like visions and subconscious fabrication; religious; pharmacological; neurological (temporal-lobe seizures and beta-endorphins)/physiological; psychological, including depersonalization; and the parapsychological holographic model of Ring. All models fail because they are unable to explain all aspects of the NDE. Analysis of individual reports in terms of each model should prove more fruitful. - DT/M.J.H.

03996. Blackmore, Susan. Visions from the dying brain. *New Scientist*, 1988 (May 5), 118, 43-46. 4 illus

Near-death experiences may tell us more about consciousness and the brain than about what lies beyond the grave. - DA

03997. Kellehear, Allan. Sociological reasons for the recent interest in near-death experiences. *Australian Institute of Psychic Research (AIPR) Bulletin*, 1985 (Jan/Feb), No. 5, 7-9. 11 refs

Four recent major changes in society have led to the recent explosion of interest in the near-death experience (NDE). (1) Technological and demographic changes underlying our experience with death: improved technology means more people are being revived after nearly dying; and more people are living in cities, where the incidence of stress and alcoholism is increasing. (2) Our resultant changing view of death and dying: death is no longer a taboo topic for conversation; and orthodox institutions and health care methods are being criticized more. (3) The changing role of religion; traditional simple images of God and the after life are being rejected. (4) Our changing relationship with institutions; society has tended to reject authority and institutional care in favor of self-help. - DT/M.J.H.

03998. Noyes, Russell, Jr. Near-death experiences: Their interpretation and significance. In Robert Kastenbaum (Ed.), *Between Life and Death* (pp. 73-88). New York, Springer, 1974. 29 refs; 2 tables

Alive one moment--but perhaps dead the next. How does a person think and feel in the midst of a life-threatening situation? Psychiatrist Russell Noyes, Jr. has studied responses to near-death experiences in a variety of circumstances, including falls, drownings, and accidents, as well as illness. Interesting though the information is on a descriptive level, Noyes presses on to a possible explanation.

Depersonalization is a central concept here. Noyes suggests that "the depersonalized state is one that mimics death." The threatened individual psychologically escapes death "for what has already happened cannot happen again; he cannot die because he is already dead." Other key concepts for Noyes are the state of hyperalertness and the generation of panoramic memory in the life-or-death crisis situation.

Here is a careful and sensitive analysis of the human response to immediate mortal danger, one that respects experiential data but attempts to draw its principles from dynamics already known in the broad realm of human behavior rather than invoke mysterious concepts to explain mysterious events. However Noyes's theory may hold up against the test of time, it offers a lucid and provocative approach for us today. - DA