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What is the Best Available Evidence for the Survival of Human Consciousness after  
Permanent Bodily Death?

**The Ghost in the Time Machine**

**by**

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## THE SCROOGE PARADOX

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“You don’t believe in me,” observed the Ghost.

“I don’t,” said Scrooge.

“What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?”

“I don’t know,” said Scrooge.

“Why do you doubt your senses?”

“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You might be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!”

– Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843)

That is the problem. Not just Scrooge, many people have seen ghosts, but modern science does not believe them because the human senses are fallible.<sup>1</sup> The paradox is that all the sciences are founded on the human faculties – either the physical senses or mental reasoning – and all are fallible, yet still we have split the atom, sent men to the moon, and eradicated smallpox. We have more than two thousand years of recorded testimony (excluding religious teachings) that death is not the end of the human personality or consciousness,<sup>2</sup> so the question is not *where* is the evidence for ‘life’ after death, but *why* science will not accept it. At the heart of this is, not that we lack the evidence for consciousness being independent of the physical body (not just as apparitions, but also as out-of-body and near-death experiences, among other things), but that we doubt the experience – a case of seeing *not* being believing – what I will call the ‘Scrooge Paradox.’

Over a hundred and fifty years on from Dickens, polls regularly find large numbers of people believing in ghosts. In the UK, 34% believe in ghosts.<sup>3</sup> In the US, between 31 and 33% of adults believe in ghosts.<sup>4</sup> What this means is that of the nine or so people you call friends,<sup>5</sup> three of them believe in ghosts. Interestingly, more people in the UK believe in life after death: between 45 and

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1 We might think that Dickens was being merely fanciful, but Edward Clodd, President of the Folklore Society (1895–1897), talking of contemporary crystal-gazing, attributed any visions obtained to liver disease, see Andrew Lang, *Cock Lane and Common Sense* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), unpaginated digital edition, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12674/12674-h/12674-h.htm>; and Joshua Slocum, the first man to sail around the world on his own, thought the apparition he saw was due to eating plums and cheese, interestingly the apparition agreed with him, see *Sailing Alone Around the World* (New York: Century, 1901), p. 39f.

2 Early examples include several accounts told by Cicero in “On Divination,” c. 45 BCE, in *Cicero on the Nature of the Gods* [etc.], trans. W.D. Yonge (London: G. Bell, 1878), pp. 178, 179, 189, and 266; and a story about the philosopher Athenodorus (c. 74 BCE–7 CE) told by Pliny the Younger, see ‘LXXXIII. To Sura’, in *Letters*, ed. Charles W. Eliot, trans. William Melmoth (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1909-1914).

3 Will Dahlgreen, “‘Ghosts Exist,’ Say 1 in 3 Brits,” YouGov, 2014, <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2014/10/31/ghosts-exist-say-1-3-brits>, accessed March 2, 2021.

47%.<sup>6</sup> More than a quarter (27%) of those in the UK thought it possible to communicate with the deceased, compared to 21% in the US and 24% in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Polling in the UK went further and asked people whether they believed that they had communicated with the deceased: 9% said yes.<sup>8</sup> These are large proportions of the population and may be greater in other parts of the world.<sup>9</sup>

Unexpectedly, the statistics doubled when people were asked whether they had seen a ghost. A 2018 survey of 2,000 people in the US found that 60% said that they believed that they had seen a ghost.<sup>10</sup> Although these were different studies, what this pattern seems to indicate is that more people believe that they have seen a ghost based on their own experience, but fewer are prepared to commit to saying that they believe in ghosts as a fact. In a sense, then, people do not even believe themselves – just like Scrooge.

I confess that I am like Scrooge, too. As someone involved in research in this field, scientifically investigating alleged hauntings and mediums, amongst other things, the experiences I have had that could be interpreted as encounters with spirits, I have explained away as random coincidence, even trickery, or due to psychological factors.<sup>11</sup> Our identification with the body is so strong as to make

- 4 The statistics have been reasonably consistent: 32% in 2005, 31% in 2000 and 33% in 1999. For 2005, see Linda Lyons, “One-Third of Americans Believe Dearly May Not Have Departed,” Gallup, 2005, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/17275/OneThird-Americans-Believe-Dearly-May-Departed.aspx>, accessed March 2, 2021; for 1999-2000, see Darren K. Carlson, “One Third of Americans Believe in Ghosts,” Gallup, 2000, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/2380/One-Third-Americans-Believe-Ghosts.aspx>, accessed March 2, 2021.
- 5 Joseph Carroll, “Americans Satisfied with Number of Friends, Closeness of Friendships,” Gallup, 2004, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/10891/americans-satisfied-number-friends-closeness-friendships.aspx>, accessed March 2, 2021.
- 6 “Faith Survey: UK Religion Survey 2017,” ComRes for the BBC, found belief in life after death at 46%; Ipsos Mori 2003, 2007, found 45% and 47% respectively; so there has been a consistent level of belief over time.
- 7 Linda Lyons, “Paranormal Beliefs Come (Super)Naturally to Some,” Gallup (2005), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/19558/paranormal-beliefs-come-supernaturally-some.aspx>, accessed July 6, 2021.
- 8 Dahlgreen, ““Ghosts Exist.””
- 9 When we look at other countries we find even larger proportions: in Taiwan, for example, research has shown that from 70 to 87% believe in ghosts, see H.Y. Chiu, *General Social Survey in Taiwan*, 5th Survey, Part II [in Chinese] (Academia Sinica, 1994) and Mark Magnier, “Afraid to Give Up Ghosts,” *Los Angeles Times* (July 18, 2006), <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-jul-18-fg-ghosts18-story.html>, accessed May 21, 2021. Although dated, Haraldsson reviewed data for Iceland and Sweden as well as the UK and USA, see Erlendur Haraldsson, “Representative National Surveys of Psychic Phenomena: Iceland, Great Britain, Sweden, U.S.A. and Gallup’s Multinational Survey,” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 53.801 (1985), pp. 145-158.
- 10 Survey conducted by OnePoll for Groupon, see “Groupon Halloween Survey: More than 60% of People Have Seen a Ghost,” *BusinessWire*, 2018, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20181010005634/en/Groupon-Halloween-Survey-60-Percent-People-Ghost>, accessed March 2, 2021. An earlier survey by Pew found that 18% of US adults claimed to have seen a ghost and 29% felt “in touch” with someone who had died, both trends were rising compared to surveys in 1996 and 1990 (increasing by 100% for seeing ghosts from 1996 to 2009), see “Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths,” *Pew Research Center* (Dec. 9, 2009), <https://www.pewforum.org/2009/12/09/many-americans-mix-multiple-faiths/>, accessed July 6, 2021.
- 11 Philosophical, ethical and even aesthetic arguments against survival are merely prejudices in fine clothes, however. For an instructive tour of many of the objections, see E.R. Dodds, “Why I Do Not Believe in Survival,”

existence without it seem ludicrous. So this essay is not just about the ‘best’ evidence – the best evidence has already been published – but about whether I could convince Scrooge, or myself, that there is sufficiently compelling evidence.

Some of the greatest names in parapsychology have also doubted the evidence for life after death. In 1972, the famous reincarnation researcher Dr. Ian Stevenson chaired a symposium with the subject “What evidence, if you had it, would convince you of survival?” Karlis Osis from the American Society for Psychical Research was there, as was Germany’s foremost parapsychologist at the time, Prof. Hans Bender of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie (Institute for the Border Areas of Psychology), also Dr. John Palmer of the University of Virginia, and Dr. W.G. Roll of the Psychical Research Foundation. Bender was forthright: “I actually see no way for cogent proof.” Roll argued that “Since the dead cannot be directly observed and since we do not know whether the entities which speak through mediums are who they claim to be, we are unable to tell whether consciousness continues after death.” Finally, Stevenson reported that the prevailing theory among parapsychologists (at least in 1972) was that extrasensory perception (ESP) of the living accounted for what had previously been regarded as evidence of life after death (what came to be known as the ‘super-psi’ or, better, the living-agent psi hypothesis).<sup>12</sup> Many parapsychologists are like Scrooge, too.

Dickens did not make Scrooge have a near-death experience, an out-of-body experience, a religious revelation or a scientific discovery, he had him see a ghost because ghosts are the common currency of any discussion about the afterlife. Everyone knows what a ghost is, it needs no further explanation (at least superficially). When considering what the best evidence for the continuation of the human personality after permanent physical death is or could be, the question of ‘ghosts’ must be the first one to examine because it is the most common and well-known experience across both human history and culture. As far as the extent of our current knowledge allows, we may state that there was never a time when ‘ghosts’ were not talked of and never a people who did not talk of them. This means that it must provide the most documented evidence from the greatest range of people, including the most credible and reliable witnesses.

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*Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 42 (1934), pp. 147-172.

12 This was at the Parapsychological Association Convention in Edinburgh, see “Symposium: What Evidence, If You Had It, Would Convince You of Survival?,” in W.G. Roll, R.L. Morris and J.D. Morris (eds), *Research in Parapsychology 1972: Abstracts and Papers from the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association, 1972* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1973), pp. 177-187. My thanks to David Ellis for bringing this to my attention.

Logically, if we are going to become ghosts after death, then we must have this ghost potential now; and, if ghosts after death, then why not also before life? Therefore, ‘ghosts,’ as an immaterial identity format, or IIF (that will be our working definition), must also be implicated in things such as mediumship, near-death experiences, out-of-body experiences and even reincarnation, expanding our evidential base and scope for theoretical modelling.

When Scrooge sees the ghost of his former partner, Jacob Marley, he finds that Marley in death is just like Marley in life. Scrooge might not believe in him, but he does recognize him. For the survival of consciousness after the death of the physical body to be recognizable as such, then it, too, must involve the experiences, personality traits, and self-awareness that characterized the person in the living body, that strange sense of ‘I’ that we have floating inside our heads.

However, if Scrooge did not believe in Marley, will one piece of evidence be enough? Although William James famously asserted in connection with the supernatural that one ‘white crow’ is sufficient to prove that not all crows are black,<sup>13</sup> which is entirely correct, the existence of one white crow did not change Scrooge’s mind, and has not changed our materialist paradigm. What we must do is gather a flock of white crows.

The ‘best’ evidence, then, is not one single piece of evidence – we have plenty of that,<sup>14</sup> and herein also lies a problem. The sheer amount of evidence has become too much for the average person to sift through, too diverse in its content to grasp, too contested to judge easily; simply, all too much to take in. This cognitive challenge defaults to denial. We need to find structure in the evidence, if we are going to be able to make sense of it.

The way in which apparitions present themselves to us tells us something about them and in doing so will raise questions about the nature of reality. Dickens again provided us with an interesting structure in *A Christmas Carol*. The ghost of Marley opens a supernatural journey involving “The Ghost of Christmas Past,” “The Ghost of Christmas Present,” and “The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come.” We tend to think of ghosts as things of the past, yet, if anything of ourselves should survive physical death, then it must also be capable of spanning temporality. This creates a new way of approaching the question of survival that will lead us to a new conclusion.

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13 Quoted in Robert O. Ballou, *William James on Psychical Research* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p. 41.

14 In his book *One Hundred Cases for Survival* (New York, B. Ackerman, 1944), A.T. Baird wrote “A thousand equally good cases could be produced as easily; in fact, at times I was embarrassed with the wealth of material at my disposal” (p. x), and since then we have some eighty years of more cases.

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All of what we will look at will seem outrageous, individually, but taken together will form something more than the sum of its parts. The best evidence must also include a theory. It is a frequent counter-argument against parapsychology in general that it has no theory. Importantly, the theory should not, like the carthorse, come before the facts; however, simply arranging the facts has led me to my theory, and it is important to show them in that order to demonstrate how I have arrived at my conclusions.

As often claimed, does the evidence need to be ‘extraordinary?’<sup>15</sup> We cannot even define what that should mean. Is the evidence for anything in science actually ‘extraordinary?’ And what if we only had ‘ordinary’ evidence, would that be ruled out? A common standard for deciding cases where the stakes are high – life after death would seem to qualify – is found in the legal system: it must be “beyond reasonable doubt.” The problem is, that like ‘extraordinary evidence,’ ‘reasonable doubt’ is a circular definition and law courts have conspicuously refused to define it.<sup>16</sup>

In a rare attempt to make ‘reasonable doubt’ understandable to jurors, the Federal Judicial Center made the following instruction:

Proof beyond a reasonable doubt is proof that leaves you firmly convinced of the defendant’s guilt. There are very few things in this world that we know with absolute certainty, and in criminal cases the law does not require proof that overcomes every possible doubt.<sup>17</sup>

It could be argued that “firmly convinced” is just as circular as “beyond a reasonable doubt,” but the crucial clarification is that proof does not need to answer “every possible doubt.”

Are Scrooge’s doubts reasonable? He does not believe in Marley’s being a ghost because he believes that “a slight disorder of the stomach” may cause hallucinations. It should be easy to establish that *slight* disorders do not cause much, apart from wind perhaps, and certainly not realistic, interactive hallucinations, therefore, Scrooge’s doubts are *not* reasonable, but still he persists in them. We cannot define exactly what a reasonable doubt is, but we can show when a specific doubt is groundless.

What sort of witnesses will we be dealing with? What type of evidence is being presented? Is it direct, circumstantial, primary or secondary, or hearsay? In most cases we will be dealing with

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15 Often attributed to Carl Sagan (the ‘Sagan Standard’), but originally formulated by Marcello Truzzi, “On the Extraordinary: An Attempt at Clarification,” *Zetetic Scholar*, 1.1 (1978), p. 11.

16 Melissa Corwin, “Defining Proof Beyond a Reasonable Doubt for the Criminal Jury: The Third Circuit Accepts an Invitation to Tolerate Constitutionally Inadequate Phraseology,” *Villanova Law Review*, 46.4 (2001), pp. 829-853.

17 Federal Judicial Center, “Pattern Criminal Jury Instructions No. 21” (1998), p. 29.

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eyewitnesses giving direct evidence, that is, “personal experience through their senses.”<sup>18</sup> In the same way that witnesses giving direct evidence are not dismissed by the court as repeating anecdotes, so our witnesses should not be accused of the same: what we are dealing with is testimony.<sup>19</sup> Witness testimony has its own drawbacks, which is why we will also seek corroboration and supporting evidence. We will also hear from expert witnesses with specialized knowledge in the matter.

At the outset of this project, I believe that the mind is simply a product of the brain and that nothing of the person can continue after death. But I have some niggling doubts because I am not unaware of the evidence. As I said, I am like Scrooge, too, but I am going to see if I can prove myself wrong. This, in itself, is a good scientific principle, what Sir Karl Popper called ‘falsification.’

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18 *Evidence in Criminal Investigations* (London: Home Office Staff, 2020), pp. 11, 13.

19 Even sceptics dismiss their own experiences as “anecdote” when they contradict their established worldview, see Michael Shermer, “Infrequencies,” *Scientific American*, 311.4 (October, 2014), p. 97.

## GHOSTS OF THE PAST

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### “Only One Thing is Certain About Apparitions”

“Only one thing is certain about apparitions,” wrote Andrew Lang in 1894, “namely this, that they do appear. They really are perceived.”<sup>20</sup> But ‘apparitions,’ originally from Latin *apparere* ‘appear,’ are only appearances, and, as we know, appearances can be deceptive. When I saw my first ‘apparition,’ I was not looking for one, and, Scrooge-like, certainly did not ‘believe’ in it, but when I went looking for ghosts?

I had good odds, about 1 in 10, of finding one. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), especially founded to investigate claims of the paranormal, launched its “Census of Hallucinations,” asking 17,000 people by postal survey:<sup>21</sup>

Have you ever, when believing yourself to be completely awake, had a vivid impression of seeing or being touched by a living being or inanimate object, or of hearing a voice; which impression, so far as you could discover, was not due to any external physical cause?

This had happened to 1,684 people (9.9%) at least once, with 1,112 reporting visual hallucinations, including realistic human apparitions (830 cases) of the living (352 cases), the deceased (163 cases), and unrecognized (315 cases) – the rest being incomplete (143), or “other” (139).<sup>22</sup>

The odds are better for those who purposely set out to find them. In 2012, I surveyed self-professed paranormal investigators (‘ghost hunters’).<sup>23</sup> The data showed that the average ghost hunter was a white male in his early forties, who had spent nine years investigating almost a hundred cases. Collectively, the people I surveyed had spent 490 years investigating 4,861 cases. One individual claimed over a thousand investigations during thirty-four years. It was an astonishing amount of time and dedication, but had they found anything?

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20 Lang, *Cock Lane and Common-Sense*, pp. 180-1. A well-respected anthropologist, folklorist and psychical researcher, Lang served as President of both the Folklore Society and the Society for Psychical Research.

21 “Report on the Census of Hallucinations,” 10 (1894), pp. 25ff, especially Table VI, p. 45.

22 One problem with the data was the researchers’ classification of it, with Gurney and Myers classing apparitions appearing within 12 hours of death as “transitional ghosts” and putting them in the “phantasms of the living” group, see Edmund Gurney and Frederic Myers, “On Apparitions Occurring Soon After Death,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 5 (1888-1889), pp. 403-85.

23 The research was conducted from September into November, 2012, with 402 questionnaires sent by email to pre-selected participants, and 53 returns, giving a 13% response rate, which was within the expected range of 10-20% normally cited for online surveys, see Leo Ruickbie, *A Brief Guide to Ghost Hunting* (London: Robinson, 2013).

When asked “have you ever experienced what you would call a ‘ghost,’” 89% said “yes.”<sup>24</sup> In total, 238 separate events were reported.<sup>25</sup> These experiences were visual (40%), non-visual (45%), and anomalous encounters of an indeterminate nature (15%). The reported phenomena were not always independent events, sometimes taking place concurrently or simultaneously. When I joined a group of ghost hunters to investigate 30 East Drive, Pontefract, today’s top contender for the “most haunted house” title, I saw the process of such investigations firsthand, but Scrooged my own experiences as psychological and coincidental.<sup>26</sup>

We must conclude, that if you go ghost hunting, you will most likely experience something that you might think of as a ‘ghost.’ It may take several investigations over many years, but the probability is high that you will at least convince yourself. But what would constitute the case most likely to convince others? And more particularly, where in time are apparitions?

## **Ghosts Still in the Past**

### *“They Were Coming Out of the Wall”*

Eighteen-year-old plumber’s apprentice, Harry Martindale, was in the cellars of the Treasurer’s House, an historic house in York, UK, working on the central-heating system, when he heard the distant “blaring of a note,” in his words. Perched on a ladder, Martindale continued his work as the sound grew louder. Looking down, he saw a figure wearing a plumed helmet and holding a trumpet-like instrument come through the wall followed by a horse and rider, and a column of Roman soldiers. Martindale fell off his ladder with fright and watched as about twenty soldiers marched across the cellar.<sup>27</sup> Martindale described the scene:

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24 Compare this to research on the so-called psychomanteum, a dark enclosure in which the subject stares at a reflective surface to induce hallucinatory experiences. In one study (n=10), 100% of participants reported an audio/visual anomaly, with 70% believing that they had contact with a deceased person: John Savoie, “Psychomanteum Research,” <https://psican.org/index.php/psychical-phenomena/855-psychomanteum-research>, accessed 14 July 2021. The frequently reported monk-like figures in this study are perceptually similar to the shadow figures reported in my own survey and the typical “black monk” reported in the ghost literature. The classic text is Raymond Moody and Paul Perry, *Reunions: Visionary Encounters with Departed Loved Ones* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), involving 300 test subjects. Moody even suggests using his method in the investigation of hauntings (p. 188).

25 Some people said that they had seen several apparitions without giving a number, so all that could be done was to log such statements as more than one, but without knowing the true figure it was not possible to go higher than two. At the extreme end, a minority of people who expressed mediumistic powers claimed to see spirits more or less all of the time. Therefore, the actual reportable number of visual experiences of human figures is undoubtedly higher.

26 Leo Ruickbie, “A Night With the Black Monk: Inside 30 East Drive, Home of the Black Monk of Pontefract,” *Paranormal Review*, 83 (2017), pp. 8-17. For claims regarding 30 East Drive, see <http://www.30eastdrive.com> and Richard Estep and Bil Bungay, *The Black Monk of Pontefract: The World’s Most Violent and Relentless Poltergeist* (NP: Privately Published, 2019).

[...] They were coming out of the wall, the wall didn't exist as far as they were concerned. The only other Roman soldier I'd seen prior to this, is what we call, or I call, the Charlton Heston type – riding a beautiful horse, very smart. These were the complete opposite. The first thing that struck me was how small they were, they were very small indeed. Another remarkable thing when they first came out of the wall – I couldn't see them from the knees down, until they came to where the Roman road had been excavated – then I could see them from their sandals up. [...] I wouldn't say they were all that smart, although they did all [have] the same uniform on. [...] On the top on the material were strands of leather all the way round, and the only thing I can say they had on was a green-coloured skirt. All of them carried a short sword on the right hand side, the side nearest to me, and it was a short sword like an oversized dagger. [...] One was carrying a long, like a lance affair, and one of the soldiers I saw walking out the wall carried a shield. Now in the centre of the shield it was like a raised bulb.<sup>28</sup>

As the last soldier passed through the opposite wall, Martindale made his escape. He was found by the museum's curator, who said "By the look of you, you've seen the Roman soldiers." Martindale went home and called his doctor, telling him what he had seen, and was signed off work with shock. Years later, when Martindale gave his first interview about the incident, he could not remember when it had taken place, but the doctor was able to provide the date from Martindale's medical records. When asked "Are there such things as ghosts?", Martindale's unequivocal answer was "Yes."<sup>29</sup>

Martindale's description seemed in complete contrast to his Hollywood-level understanding of the Roman military. In particular, he described the use of a round shield.<sup>30</sup> We think of the legions equipped with the large rectangular *scutum*; however, the original infantry shield was the round *clipeus*, later being replaced by the defensively superior *scutum*, only to come back into use during

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27 Mike Laycock, "Famous Ghost Witness Harry Martindale Dies," *The York Press* (October 25, 2014), <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/11559578.famous-ghost-witness-harry-martindale-dies/>, accessed June 2, 2021; Emily Flanagan, "Modest Man at Centre of York's Most Famous Ghost Story Passes Away," *Northern Echo* (October 25, 2014), <https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/11560152.modest-man-centre-yorks-famous-ghost-story-passes-away/>, accessed June 2, 2021.

28 "Legends of the Roman Legionnaires," *Ghosthunters*, Series 1, Episode 1 (1996), transcript at <https://forteanfindings.blogspot.com/2017/03/transcript-of-ghosthunters-legends-of.html>, accessed June 2, 2021.

29 "Harry Martindale Interview – Bonus Video," [undated interview with Richard Felix] <https://vimeo.com/326340558>, accessed June 3, 2021.

30 In another interview, Martindale said "they were carrying small shields," and indicated the shape over his arm with a circular motion of his other hand and has made written testimony that the shields were round – this last point is referred to by the narrator of "Legends of the Roman Legionnaires."

the crisis of the third century. It had a distinctive projection in the centre. After the Roman conquest of Britain in the first century AD, Roman auxiliaries (usually locally raised troops) continued to use the *clipeus*. In the second century AD, there were over 25,000 auxiliaries deployed in the Roman province of Britannia.<sup>31</sup> According to the National Trust, which now owns the property, later research showed that the Sixth Legion was withdrawn from York during the fourth century AD and replaced by soldiers armed with round shields (presumably auxiliaries).<sup>32</sup>

The cellar where Martindale was working had been built over an old Roman road, the *Via Decumana*.<sup>33</sup> Over the centuries, this had resulted in a height difference of some 15 to 18 inches.<sup>34</sup> As Martindale had observed during the experience, the soldiers appeared to march through the newer floor until reaching an excavated portion where he could see their feet touching the ground. The old *Via Decumana* had no obstructing walls, so it was again instructive that Martindale witnessed the troops enter through one stone wall and exit out another, exactly as if the walls had not been there. In addition to their appearance, their behaviour also strongly suggested that Martindale had indeed witnessed a body of Roman soldiers marching along the *Via Decumana*, almost 2,000 years after they had *physically* done so.

Given the witness's age, it might be thought that here was a youth having a lark, but, after finding his story met with ridicule and disbelief, including being pressured by a local church to stay silent, Martindale kept quiet about it until interviewed for television in the 1970s. Described in the press as a "modest man," Martindale went on to become a policeman and was remembered by the Lord Mayor of York, Ian Gillies, as a dedicated officer. Property manager for Treasurer's House, Jane Whitehead, said of Martindale's experience, "Unless he had done a lot of detailed research into the soldiers that belonged to that section of the Roman army he could not have known the level of detail he used to describe the soldiers he saw."<sup>35</sup>

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31 William Smith (ed.), *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London: John Murray, 1875), pp. 269-270, 297-299, 870; Paul Holder, "Auxiliary Deployment in the Reign of Hadrian," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 81 (2003), pp. 101-145. In addition, riders bore the round *parma*, also distinguished by a central boss, as did the *velites*, the poorest class of light infantry armed with short swords (*gladii*), although the *velites* were disbanded in the second century BC. The Romans also knew a smaller round target (shield) called the *cetra* that was used by the ancient Britons, among others.

32 "By the Look of You, You've Seen the Romans," National Trust website (undated), <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/by-the-look-of-you-youve-seen-the-romans>, accessed June 4, 2021.

33 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in City of York*, vol. 5 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1981), pp. 69-76.

34 Some printed accounts give 15 inches, whilst Martindale has stated 18 inches in interview.

35 "This Job's Not for the Faint-Hearted," *The York Press* (June 21, 2003).

Not only is Martindale's account detailed and corroborated by other sources, but he is not alone in having had this experience. In addition to the then curator's admission about the ghosts, there have been at least three other sightings of Roman soldiers in the cellar. Around 1900 a party guest of the industrialist Frank Green, then the owner of the Treasurer's House, complained about finding her way barred by someone she took to be in fancy dress, wearing the uniform of a Roman soldier – Green knew nothing about it. A visiting American professor in the 1930s is also reputed to have seen the ghosts in the cellar. In February 1956, the then housekeeper for the National Trust, Joan Morsen, went down to the cellar to check on the central heating and saw the Roman soldiers. Living in the house at the time with her seven-year-old daughter, Morsen kept quiet about what she had seen to avoid frightening the girl. It was only when Martindale's story became more widely known in the 1970s that she told her story. Her daughter then confessed to having heard the horn on several occasions and being woken up in the night by it.<sup>36</sup>

Standing outside on an autumn evening in 2014, not long after Martindale had died, I remember the local guide describing the experience and adding that Martindale stuck to his story to the end. As a member of the SPR's Spontaneous Cases Committee set up to investigate people's reports of paranormal experiences, I recently interviewed someone who could tell a somewhat similar story to Martindale's. My source had been a housekeeper at an Elizabethan manor near Brandeston in Suffolk in the early 2000s and during that time heard several accounts of strange happenings from the owners, an elderly married couple. One of these stories involved them both seeing a figure in the distance walking along a track through marshland on their property. Other than obviously trespassing, the unusual features were that he seemed to be wearing some kind of simple cloth tunic tied at the waste, was only visible from the knees up, and faded away whilst being watched. The old track would have been lower in earlier times.<sup>37</sup> But what exactly do people see in such situations?

### *Ghosts in the Environment?*

In my survey, I also wanted to know what the ghost hunters thought ghosts were. The largest number of people believed that ghosts were ghosts in the traditional sense of the word, that is, the spirits of those who have passed on. However, the second largest group gave non-spiritual answers, ranging from quantum theory to extra dimensions and parallel worlds, to powers of the mind and environmental recordings. Some people also believed in both spiritual and non-spiritual theories, commonly expressed as describing one level of haunting as a recording (or residual haunting) and

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<sup>36</sup> "Harry Martindale Interview – Bonus Video."

<sup>37</sup> Pers. com., June 19, 2021. The house has since been sold and the original witnesses are presumed to be deceased.

another as the spirit of the deceased to account for seemingly repetitive and interactive phenomena. While most ghost hunters had experienced something that they would call a ghost, not all of them saw that as evidence for life after death.

Ghosts as recordings, residues, imprints or impressions has been debated for some time.<sup>38</sup> Archie Roy, Professor of Astronomy at Glasgow University and President of the Society for Psychical Research (1992–1995), put it best when commenting on the Martindale case:

You have to postulate that in the case of a typical haunt some very emotion-laden scene or some very important scene from the point of view of the humans that took part in it, has in some way become registered on the environment. [...] a sort of psychic video that has been created. And someone who comes along who's sensitive enough to act as a "psychic video player" will actually play that tape and see the figures, or perhaps even hear voices or hear sounds. [...] it is nothing to do with the people who were originally there, who are no longer there. It is simply a record.<sup>39</sup>

Whilst superficially plausible, the recording theory is only using a modern technological metaphor in place of earlier spiritual theories: it is not a theory in itself because it does not adequately propose what the recording medium is, or how the playback mechanism works (or in most cases does not). Nor does the proposition address what is known about recordings. To make a visual recording one requires a recording device, a medium on which to record it, a means to develop that medium in the case of film, and a means to replay that medium on another, different device from that making the recording, either by displaying it on a screen, or projecting it; audio recording requires its own process of recording and playback. In the Martindale case, or others like it, there is no obvious recording or playback device and no obvious medium. Furthermore, Martindale witnessed a life-like, three-dimensional, full-colour event with sound that moved through space. It was not displayed or projected, and was of a quality beyond our current technological level. Typically, a recording will degrade significantly over time as a consequence of the instability of the original recording medium and the effects of the environment in which it is stored, yet Martindale described an undegraded, pristine scene.

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38 The earliest to propose an imprinting of memory in the environment was H.M. Radnor in a letter of January 16, 1893, in F.W.H. Myers, "The Subliminal Consciousness," *PSPR*, p. 79. Ernesto Bozzano and H.H. Price formulated similar ideas, see Ruickbie, *Ghost Hunting*, unpaginated digital edition. The theory is now widely disseminated, see, for example, Andrew Mackenzie, "Ghosts and Haunted Houses," in Gordon Stein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Paranormal* (New York: Prometheus, 1996), p. 299.

39 "Legends of the Roman Legionnaires."

The emotional mechanism is also contradicted by Martindale's experience. The apparitions he witnessed were engaged in a normal, undramatic and unimportant activity (for soldiers, at least). He described no emotional content to the scene itself. Nor was Martindale especially "sensitive:" as far as we know, he had no other experiences like this during his lifetime. What Martindale saw was not like any sort of recording as we know it, and none of the features said to be required to make or receive such a recording – emotional intensity and exceptional psychic sensitivity – were present. We can rule out that it was a "simply a record."

### *Ghosts in the Mind?*

A common argument against the objective or independent quality of apparitions is that they are the product of the mind of the person seeing them, an illusion, in fact. This is plausible. We know that people see hallucinations under a range of conditions, such as sleep deprivation, sensory deprivation, drug intoxication, extreme stress, and mental derangement.<sup>40</sup> So what should be different about ghosts? It is important to note that Martindale was not under the influence of any of these factors, but how else could we test this?

People have tried to record ghosts using photography, film (video) and audio, with occasionally surprising results; however, almost all of these can be explained as artefacts or manipulations of the media, even if they may not be. We had best leave that Pandora's Box alone.

We have seen that apparitions can reveal information to the witness that they did not already have and often did not know they needed. This seems like cast-iron proof that apparitions cannot be in the mind of the witness; however, we could still argue that this was the percipient's psi (the general term for telepathy, precognition, etc.) working unconsciously to manifest what the conscious mind required. It seems a bit strained, but even so, we could argue that.

What if a ghost were seen by more than one person? Would that test the percipient psi theory? There are two classes of possibility here: the same ghost seen by different witnesses at different times; and the same ghost seen by different witnesses at the same time. There are plentiful examples for both situations.

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40 Studies include P. Fenwick, S. Galliano, M.A. Coate, V. Rippere, and D. Brown, "Psychic Sensitivity, Mystical Experience, Head Injury and Brain Pathology," *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 58 (1985), pp. 35-44; B. Spivak, S.F. Trottern, M. Mark, A. Bleich, A. Weizman, "Acute Transient Stress-Induced Hallucinations in Soldiers," *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 160 (1992), pp. 412-414; for an overview, see Frances Klemperer, "Ghosts, Visions, and Voices: Sometimes Simply Perceptual Mistakes," *British Medical Journal*, 305 (December 19-26, 1992), pp. 1518-1519. Prof. Donald West also noted phenomenological differences between pathological and non-pathological hallucinations – notably the association of other symptoms in pathological cases, see Donald J. West, "Visionary and Hallucinatory Experiences: A Comparative Appraisal," *International Journal of Parapsychology*, 2.1 (1960), p. 94.

The Martindale case has already supplied an example of the former, but, of course, there are many more. A young medical student, Rosina Clara Despard (1863–1930), conducted a detailed investigation of the haunting of her family home in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. A ghost was seen or heard over a number of years from 1882 to 1889 by at least eighteen people (independently, sometimes consecutively, and on four occasions at the same time), and by the family dogs (judging from their reactions). Frederic Myers was also involved, interviewing witnesses, and encouraging Rosina to investigate further. Andrew Mackenzie, another figure connected with the SPR, collected reports of continued paranormal phenomena up until the 1970s.<sup>41</sup>

In the Census of Hallucinations there were 283 cases where the percipient was not alone (and the other person was awake). The other person also saw the apparition in 95 cases (33.6%). There were also another 43 auditory cases experienced by more than one person at the same time.<sup>42</sup> Hart et al., used stricter criteria to identify 46 cases “in which more than one person was in a position to be a percipient” and of these found that 26 (56%) were “collective.”<sup>43</sup> Stevenson looked at other research to conclude that approximately 30% of visual hallucinations were seen by more than one witness.<sup>44</sup>

Gurney still tried to explain collective apparitions as the psi effect of a principle percipient telepathically causing everyone else to see the same thing, what he called “psychical affection,” and Stevenson “telepathic infection.” Stevenson pointed out that this leaves the perplexing question of why the group should suddenly become telepathic on the occasion of the ghost’s appearance, and on no other; Tyrell also argued that the witnesses all saw the same apparition, but differently because it

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41 Published pseudonymously as R.C. Morton, “Record of a Haunted House,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 8 (1892), pp. 311-332 – she only identifies eighteen separate individuals, but also mentions additional but undifferentiated servants and visitors; she says herself at one point “in all about 20 people” (p. 318). On her identity, see Andrew Mackenzie, *Hauntings and Apparitions* (London: Heinemann, 1982); although first revealed by B. Abdy Collins, *The Cheltenham Ghost* (London: Psychic Press, 1948), which is now very rare. In a 1952 lecture, the Cambridge psychologist R.H. Thouless and former President of the SPR stated that this was the best study of an alleged haunting, see “Psychical Research Past and Present,” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (1952); Andrew Mackenzie evidently concurred, choosing to mention it in detail in his short entry on “Ghosts and Haunted Houses” in Stein’s *Encyclopedia of the Paranormal*, pp. 299-303. For more recent experiences at the location, see Andrew Mackenzie, “Continuation of the ‘Record of a Haunted House,’” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 55 (January, 1988). See also the recent analysis by Christian Jensen Romer, “Revisiting a Haunted House: Gustav Holst and the Cheltenham Ghosts,” *Anomaly*, 51 (2021), pp. 35-91.

42 Stevenson, “Contributions of Apparitions,” p. 349.

43 Hornell Hart, et al., “Six Theories About Apparitions,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 50 (1956), pp. 153–239 (p. 205).

44 Ian Stevenson, “Do We Need a New Word to Supplement ‘Hallucination’?” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 140.1 (December 1983), pp. 1609-1611. Stevenson also examined the Census data, see Ian Stevenson, “The Contribution of Apparitions to the Evidence for Survival,” *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 76 (October, 1982), pp. 341-353 (p. 349).

was from their individual viewpoints, thus not like an image received from one mind.<sup>45</sup> Although immaterial, we can rule out that apparitions seen by mentally normal people not under the influence of drugs are illusions because they can be seen by several people at different times and at the same time: they demonstrate a realness that would be widely accepted if it did not contradict our dominant ideas about the nature of reality.

### **“A Sudden Review of the Past”**

In 1871, the Swiss geologist Albert Heim (1849–1937) was mountain climbing in the Appenzell Alps in northeastern Switzerland. Leading a party down a steep snowfield on 2,502 m (8,209 ft) high Mt Säntis, he lost his footing and went over a cliff. As he tumbled more than 60 ft in free fall, a curious thing happened, time slowed down: “What I felt in five to ten seconds could not be described in ten times that length of time.” He had time to plan what to do before he hit the ground – keep hold of his Alpenstock or let go, take off his glasses, or keep them on? – worry about missing his inaugural university lecture in five days time, and wonder how his loved ones would take the news of his death. His train of thought was suddenly interrupted: “I saw my whole past life take place in many images, as though on a stage at some distance from me. I saw myself as the chief character in the performance.” When he hit the snowfield below, he lay unmoving. His companions must have thought him dead, but he recovered consciousness and was fit enough to give his lecture. Despite pursuing a glowing career in geology, Heim never forgot his experience on Säntis and collected thirty similar accounts told to him in person by fellow mountaineers (including the British physicist John Tyndall), soldiers, construction workers and others who had had what today we would call near-death experiences. His was the first systematic study of such experiences and he discovered that many others had felt that “time became greatly expanded,” often with “a sudden review of the individual’s entire past.”<sup>46</sup>

Since then reports of what has become known as “life review” have increased dramatically. In 1998, Dr. Jeffrey Long established the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation (NDERF) to collect firsthand accounts of people’s near-death experiences using an online questionnaire. In the first ten years of running this project he received over 1,300 reports of NDEs.<sup>47</sup> As of 14 June 2021, NDERF has now received 4,929 reports from people all over the world.

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45 Stevenson, “Contributions of Apparitions,” p. 349; G.N.M. Tyrell, *Apparitions* (London: Duckworth, 1943), p. 72.

46 Albert Heim, “Notizen über den Tod durch Absturz,” *Jahrbuch des Schweizer Alpenclub* [Yearbook of the Swiss Alpine Club], 27 (1892), trans. By R. Noyes and R. Kletti, “The Experience of Dying from Falls,” *Omega*, 3 (1972), pp. 45-52. The experience of time expansion during free fall has been experimentally reproduced, see David M. Eagleman, “Brain Time,” in Max Brockman (ed.), *What’s Next? Dispatches on the Future of Science* (New York: Vintage, 2009).

The first case he documented was that of Dr. George Rodonaia, with an MD and PhDs in neuropathology and the psychology of religion, Rodonaia was just about the best qualified person to have a near-death experience and had one of the most astonishing near-death experiences on record. Before emigrating to the USA in 1989, Rodonaia was a research psychiatrist at the University of Moscow in what was then the Soviet Union. In 1976, he was hit by a car and pronounced dead at the scene. Near-death researcher Phyllis Atwater, who got to know Rodonaia well, said he had been assassinated by the KGB. Being dead he was taken to a morgue and remained there for three days, only showing signs of life when a doctor started to perform an autopsy. As a scalpel cut into his abdomen, he felt his consciousness being forced back into his body. Among other things, he described this experience:<sup>48</sup>

I underwent what has been called the ‘life-review process,’ for I saw my life from beginning to end all at once. I participated in the real life dramas of my life, almost like a holographic image of my life going on before me – no sense of past, present or future, just now and the reality of my life. It wasn’t as though it started with birth and ran along to my life at the University of Moscow. It all appeared at once. There I was. This was my life.<sup>49</sup>

Atwater could understand what he was talking about, she had experienced three NDEs following a miscarriage. During the second episode she experienced a profound life review:

I remembered hearing stories of past life reviews, a particular feature of dying common to all, where your life passes before you at great speed for final review. Remembering this, I expected some kind of theatrical showing of my life as Phyllis or perhaps something like a television replay, but such was not the case. Mine was not a review, it was a reliving. For me, it was a total reliving of every thought I had ever thought, every word I had ever spoken, and every deed I had ever done; plus the effect of each thought, word, and deed on everyone and anyone who had ever come within my environment or sphere of influence whether I knew them or not (including unknown passers-by on the street); plus the effect of each thought, word, and deed on weather, plants, animals, soil, trees, water, and air. It was a

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47 Jeffrey Long and Paul Perry, *Evidence of the Afterlife: The Science of Near-Death Experiences* (London: HarperOne, 2011), p. 1.

48 For Rodonaia’s experiences see Phillip Berman, *The Journey Home* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996). “P.M.H. Atwater’s Tribute to George Rodonaia,” <https://ndestories.org/dr-george-rodonaia/>, accessed June 17, 2021.

49 “1. Dr. George Rodonaia 2/7/1999. NDE 1,” Near-Death Experience Research Foundation, [https://www.nderf.org/Archives/2\\_1998\\_2001.html](https://www.nderf.org/Archives/2_1998_2001.html), accessed June 16, 2021.

reliving of the total gestalt of me as Phyllis, complete with all the consequences of ever having lived at all. No detail was left out.<sup>50</sup>

What is evidentially important here is that her experience did not match her expectations; she could not be said to have had a life review because she expected to have one. And then there's the quality of her life review itself. What is also remarkable is that life review often involves, as in Atwater's case, a total and immersive re-enactment at a transcendent level. It is not a simple replay of the past, which would situate the person's consciousness within their past self, but an experience with depth, an actual reality, often extended beyond what would have been the person's perspective in life, whilst maintaining an ordinarily impossible exterior conscious awareness. And if that is not mind blowing enough, Bruce Greyson reported of his own research into the near-death experience that "Many [...] reported that they re-experienced these past events as if they were still happening."<sup>51</sup>

For his 2011 book *Evidence of the Afterlife*, Long worked with a sub-set of 613 cases submitted between 2004 and 2008 – the "NDERF survey." He found twelve common points of agreement in near-death experiences, although other studies have used more extensive scales – Bruce Greyson's "near-death experience scale" is sixteen items long.<sup>52</sup> Four of Long's questions related to aspects of direct interest in this present study, concerning the location of consciousness, and the experience of space and time.

Long's survey found that three-fifths (60.5%) said that they had had a sense of altered space and time, with a third (33.9%) saying specifically of time that "everything seemed to be happening at once."<sup>53</sup> About one in five people (22.2%) also said that they had experienced a review of past events in their lives.<sup>54</sup> Long concluded that: "The NDERF study makes it clear that the events seen in the NDEr's life review are real" and "further strong evidence for the reality of near-death experiences."<sup>55</sup>

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50 "Excerpts from PMH Atwater's 3 NDEs," <https://ndestories.org/pmh-atwater/>, accessed June 18, 2021; see also P.M.H. Atwater, *I Died Three Times in 1977: The Complete Story* (Albany, NY: Cinema of the Mind/Starving Artists Workshop, 2021).

51 Greyson, *After*, p. 41. For further examples of the range of life review experiences reported, see Moody, *Life After Life*, pp. 55-65.

52 Bruce Greyson, "The Near-Death Experience Scale: Construction, Reliability, and Validity," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 171 (1983), pp. 369-375; Bruce Greyson, "A Typology of Near-Death Experiences," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 142 (1985), pp. 967-969; and Bruce Greyson, "Near-Death Encounters with and without Near-Death Experiences: Comparative NDE Scale Profiles," *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 8 (1990), pp. 151-161.

53 Long, *Evidence*, p. 13.

54 Long, *Evidence*, p. 14. He later refers to set of 617 NDEs in which 14% mentioned life review (p. 115).

55 Long, *Evidence*, p. 116.

In most cases, the NDE will involve some change in the perception of time, showing that our normal perception of time is not the only one.<sup>56</sup> The life review challenges normal time to an even greater extent because the experience is not like ordinary memory recall, where you remain in your own viewpoint, but a transcendent view of the totality of past events, often with sound, emotion and even actual thoughts, from an external perspective.

### **Play it Again, Scrooge: Reincarnation**

“At the time of writing,” wrote the famous cosmologist Carl Sagan in 1995, “there are three claims in the ESP field which, in my opinion, deserve serious study.”<sup>57</sup> A highly honoured public intellectual, Sagan is a credible source. He was also a founding member of what was originally called the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), a sceptical organization committed to ‘debunking’ pseudoscience; yet Sagan was always prepared to go where scientific evidence should lead, and it is that boldness that makes him worth listening to. So what were these three claims?

The first was that the human mind could influence an external, physically unconnected system, the example he gave was an electronic random number generator, using “thought alone.” The second was that the human mind could “receive thoughts or images ‘projected’ at them,” presumably by other people, under conditions of sensory deprivation. The third was that “children sometimes report the details of a previous life, which upon checking turn out to be accurate and which they could not have known about in any other way than reincarnation.”

Sagan did not believe in life after death. He liked the idea. “But,” he said, “as much as I want to believe [...] I know of nothing to suggest that it is more than wishful thinking.”<sup>58</sup> However, he had already admitted the possibility of the conditions that would make it possible: the ability of the mind to operate beyond the confines of the physical brain; and, of course, reincarnation.

At first glance, psychokinesis and telepathy (claims one and two) do not seem connected with reincarnation (claim three). Traditionally, psychokinesis and telepathy (or ESP) researchers have not been interested in reincarnation and vice versa; however, that does not mean that they are not

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56 Early research showing the importance of the time element in NDEs includes Russell Noyes and Roy Kletti, “Depersonalization in the Face of Life-Threatening Danger: A Description,” *Psychiatry*, 39 (1976), pp. 19-27; and Peter Hartocollis, *Time and Timelessness: The Varieties of Temporal Experience (A Psychoanalytic Inquiry)* (New York: International Universities Press, 1983).

57 Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (London: Headline, 1996), p. 285.

58 Quotation from Carl Sagan, *Billions and Billions: Thoughts on Life and Death at the Brink of the Millennium* (New York: Random House, 1997); for thoughts on the social function of the afterlife, see *The Demon-Haunted World*, pp. 255-256.

connected. On reflection, they must be. Both psychokinesis and telepathy demonstrate that the mind is not physically limited by the brain. Reincarnation requires that some aspects of the mind (memory and personality) must be able to exist beyond the death of the physical body; hence, they, too, are not physically limited by the brain.

So what made the sceptical Sagan believe that reincarnation could over-throw his materialist worldview? Scientific research into the phenomenon was pioneered by Dr. Ian Stevenson, beginning in 1960. He wrote some 300 papers and fourteen books on reincarnation, collecting and investigating some 3,000 cases over forty years.<sup>59</sup> As well as confirming memories of past lives by matching them with facts known about those past lives, he also found evidence of birth marks and defects in supposedly reincarnated people matching injuries received in the previous life (35%).<sup>60</sup> Despite being sceptical in 1972, as noted above, he later said that “I think a rational person, if he wants, can believe in reincarnation on the basis of evidence.”<sup>61</sup>

The two most compelling cases are those of James Leininger and Ryan Hammons.<sup>62</sup> James Leininger (1998– ) started remembering his life as a WWII fighter pilot between ages two and five, firstly by demonstrating an unusual interest in aircraft and level of knowledge beyond his age, and later by mentioning names from his former life that were confirmed. He had been called James, flown a Corsair from a ship called *Natoma*, had had a friend called Jack Larsen, and was shot down near Iwo Jima – all these details and more were later confirmed.<sup>63</sup> When Ryan Hammons (2005– ) was four, he started remembering details of a life that were finally matched with actor and Hollywood agent Marty Martin (born Morris Kolinsky, 1903–1964). Ryan’s mother contacted

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59 Notably, Ian Stevenson, “The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations,” *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 54 (1960), pp. 51-71 and 95-117; *Cases of the Reincarnation Type*, 4 vols (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1975-1983); *Children Who Remember Previous Lives* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987); *European Cases of the Reincarnation Type* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003); *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*, 2 vols (Westport: Praeger, 1997), with a popular summarization as *Where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect* (Westport: Praeger, 1997).

60 Ian Stevenson, “Birthmarks and Birth Defects Corresponding to Wounds on Deceased Persons,” *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 7.4 (1993), pp. 403-410.

61 Quoted in Alton Slagle, “Reincarnation: A Doctor Looks Beyond Death,” *Sunday News* (August 4, 1974).

62 Both cases were featured in Leslie Kean, *Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for an Afterlife* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2017), pp. 17-42, 54-79; and Ricki Stern (dir.), *Surviving Death*, Netflix (2021).

63 Andrea Leininger, Bruce Leininger, and K. Gross, *Soul Survivor: The Reincarnation of a World War II Fighter Pilot* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2009); with a detailed investigation by Jim B. Tucker, “The Case of James Leininger: An American Case of the Reincarnation Type,” *Explore*, 12 (2016), pp. 200-7.

researcher Dr. Jim Tucker, who confirmed fifty-five statements concerning Ryan's former life as Martin, including correcting a mistake on Martin's death certificate.<sup>64</sup>

As well as statements from people claiming to be reincarnated, there is confirmation from other areas of research. After an NDE about 70% report a belief in reincarnation, against 23% of the general population. It is also more than just belief, people also report NDEs directly relating to reincarnation.<sup>65</sup> In some accounts, people described being told about reincarnation or seeing others waiting to be reincarnated.<sup>66</sup> One NDEr reported a life review that extended into past lives:

My whole life went before me of things I have done and haven't done, but not just of this one lifetime, but of all the lifetimes. I know for a fact there is reincarnation. This is an absolute. I was shown all those lives and how I had overcome some of the things I had done in other lives.<sup>67</sup>

Even taking into account all of the criticisms of Stevenson's work,<sup>68</sup> his research and that of others,<sup>69</sup> is overwhelmingly convincing. The implications are clear: reincarnation must mean that consciousness persists after physical death. Having died that consciousness should be a thing of the past. What, then, does that mean about the past?

### **Does Consciousness Still Exist in the Past?**

Not only is the past still there, but that things in or of the past can apparently remain conscious and interact with the present, which is, of course, *the future* for the thing apparently still in the past. This

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64 Erlendur Haraldsson, and James G. Matlock, *I Saw a Light and Came Here* (Hove, UK: White Crow Books, 2016), pp. 214-218.

65 Amber D. Wells, "Reincarnation Beliefs Among Near-Death Experiencers," *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 12.1 (Fall, 1993), pp. 17-34.

66 Wells, "Reincarnation," p. 30. Several examples are in the NDERF database: "Niels W. NDE 9193," [https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1niels\\_w\\_nde.html](https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1niels_w_nde.html); "Jennifer W. NDE 7516," [https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1jennifer\\_w\\_nde\\_7516.html](https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1jennifer_w_nde_7516.html); "Judy G. NDE 8329," [https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1judy\\_g\\_nde\\_8329.html](https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1judy_g_nde_8329.html);

67 Wells, "Reincarnation," p. 30. This is not unique, see for example, "Chris D. NDE 794," [https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1chris\\_d\\_nde.html](https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1chris_d_nde.html).

68 E.g., C.T.K. Chari, "Reincarnation Research: Method and Interpretation," in M. Ebon (ed.), *Signet Handbook of Parapsychology* (New York: New American Library, 1978), with Ian Stevenson, "Reply to C.T.K. Chari," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 53 (1986), pp. 474-475; Terence Hines, *Pseudoscience and the Paranormal* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2003), p. 109; Leonard Angel, "Empirical Evidence for Reincarnation? Examining Stevenson's Most Impressive Case," *Skeptical Inquirer* (Fall, 1994), p. 481; Robert Baker, *Hidden Memories: Voices and Visions from Within* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996). Similar arguments have been made by others without fundamentally contributing to the debate.

69 For example, Jim B. Tucker, *Return to Life: Extraordinary Cases of Children who Remember Past Lives* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013); James G. Matlock and Erlendur Haraldsson, *I Saw A Light And Came Here*; James G. Matlock, *Signs of Reincarnation: Exploring Beliefs, Cases, and Theory* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2019). See also this new non-Western collection published at the time of writing, Gebhard Fartacek (ed.), *Druze Reincarnation Narratives: Previous Life Memories, Discourses, and the Construction of Identities* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021).

*BICS Prize Essay Competition: The Ghost in the Time Machine*

fundamentally contravenes and disrupts our everyday experience of the flow of time, but it is not just the 'past' that is disrupted.

## GHOSTS OF THE PRESENT

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### **The Final Bow: Crisis Apparitions**

“I had this weird dream last night,” said my wife on the morning of April 27, 2017. “You were talking to me, saying that someone had died, three times. I couldn’t make out the name.” She had woken up, convinced that I was trying to tell her something, only to find me fast asleep. She checked the clock – 05:00 – and went back to sleep. She thought that the dream might have been caused by her worrying about an elderly colleague and friend who had recently had a heart attack. Later that morning, the telephone rang. It was my father. He was in tears. My mother had died. Although she had been suffering from a long and debilitating illness, we had been planning to visit my parents in two weeks, and had every expectation of seeing her again. My wife had never had a dream like this before and we were not especially anxious about her condition at the time. We later found out that my mother must have died at around 05:00 that morning.

### *“A Feeling that Something Unusual was Happening”*

Whereas we had received a message in a dream, other experiences can involve actual apparitions. The famous medium Gladys Osborne Leonard (1882–1968) had a powerful experience just as she was beginning to explore her interest in Spiritualism in her early twenties. Her mother’s health had deteriorated, but Leonard did not think it was serious. She was away from home on the night of December 18, 1906, when she awoke “with a feeling that something unusual was happening.”

Leonard had an unmistakable vision of her mother, looking younger and healthier, with radiant eyes and a happy smile. When the vision faded, Leonard looked at the clock: just after 2 a.m. She went back to sleep. She slept late and awoke to find a telegram from her brother: “Mother passed away two o'clock this morning.”<sup>70</sup>

Born in 1882, the same year as the SPR was founded, Leonard’s fate would be interwoven with that of the SPR, becoming the subject of indepth research into her mediumship. She helped Sir Oliver Lodge apparently communicate with his son Raymond, killed in the First World War,<sup>71</sup> and was retained by the SPR in 1918 for three months of extensive testing involving 73 sittings, of which 70 involved anonymous sitters. In her report, the largely sceptical Helen Salter conceded that the sitters were satisfied that the medium was wholly trustworthy and had provided evidence that

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<sup>70</sup> Gladys Osborne Leonard, *My Life in Two Worlds* (London: Cassell, 1931), p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> Oliver Lodge, *Raymond; or, Life and Death* (London: Methuen & Co., 1916).

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the human personality survived death. She also convinced the even more sceptical Eleanor Sidgwick, wife of the SPR's first president Henry Sidgwick.<sup>72</sup> However, her crisis apparition was not the best evidentially.

### *Four Apparitions and a Premonition: The Case of Captain Bowyer-Bower*

On September 29, 1917, a young lady sat with the professional medium Mrs. Annie Brittain. Æta Highett had lost her fiancé, Eldred Wolferstan Bowyer-Bower, killed in action on the Western Front, and like many in her situation sought solace in Spiritualism. She had not been to see Mrs. Brittain before, but the medium was able to tell her many things about her fiancé, including the following:

She said, "He has a sister." I said, "yes, Cicely." She said, "No, that's not the name." She waited a few seconds and then said: "Joan. She has a little girl called Joan, now I get Dorothy." I said, "yes." He says, "Tell Dorothy she has the power to communicate." He also said, "She is not in this country."<sup>73</sup>

It was all true, but that was not the end of it. Bowyer-Bower's half-sister, Dorothy Spearman, lived in India at the time, and when she heard about Mrs. Brittain's message she wrote back with a strange story to tell:

On March 19 [1917], in the late part of the morning, I was sewing and talking to baby, Joan was in the sitting-room and did not see anything. I had a great feeling I must turn round and did, to see Eldred; he looked so happy and that dear mischievous look. I was so glad to see him, and told him I would just put baby in a safer place, then we could talk. "Fancy coming out here," I said, turning round again, and was just putting my hands out to give him a hug and a kiss, but Eldred had gone. I called and looked for him. I never saw him again. At first [I] thought it was simply my brain. Then I did think for a second something must have happened to him and a terrible fear came over me.<sup>74</sup>

That same morning in Bournemouth, Bowyer-Bower's sister Cecily Chater was still in bed, when her two-year-old daughter Betty came into the room, saying that "Uncle Alley Boy is

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<sup>72</sup> Mrs. W.H. (Helen) Salter, "A Further Report on Sittings with Mrs. Leonard," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 32 (1922), pp. 1-143; Mrs. Henry (Eleanor) Sidgwick, "Miss Nea Walker's 'The Bridge: A Case for Survival,'" *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 38 (1928-1929), pp. 10-6; see also Marguerite Radclyffe-Hall and Una Troubridge, "On a Series of Sittings with Mrs. Osborne Leonard," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 30 (1920), pp. 339-554.

<sup>73</sup> "Cases. I. Apparitions at the Time of Death. L. 1223," *Journal of the SPR*, 19 (April 1919), pp. 39-46. The investigation was conducted by SPR member Hubert Wales, although he is not credited as the author.

<sup>74</sup> "L. 1223," p. 40.

downstairs” (Alley Boy was his pet-name since childhood). Cecily explained that he was in France, but the girl was insistent.

In the afternoon later that day, Mrs. Watson, an elderly friend of Mrs. Bowyer-Bower wrote to her about Eldred, saying “about tea time, a certain and awful feeling came over her that he was killed.” Mrs. Bowyer-Bower wrote back that he was “fit and happy.”<sup>75</sup>

At dawn on March 19, 1917, Captain Bowyer-Bower, 59 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, took out a lumbering RE8 two-seater biplane on a reconnaissance mission over German lines, with 2nd Lt Eric Elgey as observer. A second RE8 flew as an escort. About an hour into their flight, German fighter planes of Jagdstaffel 2 found them, and began firing at Bowyer-Bower’s aircraft, shooting it down near Croisilles, Pas-de-Calais, behind enemy lines.<sup>76</sup>

Cecily received a telegram from the War Office on March 23, with the news that he was missing in action. About two weeks later, Dorothy read the news in the Indian newspapers. At this point he was still listed missing.

His father, a captain with the Corps of Royal Engineers, was also fighting on the Western Front. On May 10, 1917, as the British advanced during the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line, he came across a makeshift cross made from aeroplane wreckage on which someone had written “Two unknown captains of the Royal Flying Corps.” It was the grave of his son and Elgey – Eldred Bowyer-Bower was only now confirmed killed in action.<sup>77</sup>

In late November or early December, 1917, Eldred’s mother, Margaret Bowyer-Bower, was woken in the night, first feeling too hot, then “extraordinarily cold with a most unnatural coldness.” As she tried to return to sleep, “a yellow-blue ray came right across the room.” She thought that the maid had not drawn the air-raid curtains properly, but as it continued to move, “I watched, not at all nervously, and something like a crumpled filmy piece of chiffon unfolded and the beautiful wavy top of Eldred’s head appeared.” The apparition continued to develop, apparently in full and realistic colour, as she noted “his lovely blue eyes.” He turned and looked at her. The development of the form stopped at the chin and “quivered and shook so much.” Worried that it would disappear, Mrs.

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<sup>75</sup> “L. 1223,” p. 44.

<sup>76</sup> Norman Franks and Hal Giblin, *Under the Guns of the German Aces: Immelmann, Voss, Göring, Lothar von Richthofen – The Complete Record of Their Victories and Victims* (London: Grub Street Publ., 1997). “Bowyer-Bower, E.W. (Eldred Wolferstan),” <http://www.rafmuseumstoryvault.org.uk/archive/bowyer-bower-e.w.-eldred-wolferstan>, accessed June 25, 2021. [https://number59squadron.com/memorial/rfc/memorial\\_bowyer\\_bower.html](https://number59squadron.com/memorial/rfc/memorial_bowyer_bower.html), accessed June 25, 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Franks and Giblin, *Under the Guns*. They were reburied in a military cemetery.

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Bowyer-Bower reached out her hands, saying “Eldred, I see you.” At once, “it all flickered quite out, light and all.” She considered that it “might have been a dream,” but “in my own mind I am satisfied it was not.” She also mentioned that “Eldred referred to it through Mrs. Leonard in Jan. 1918.”<sup>78</sup>

Æta Highett also had an experience sometime in December, 1917:

I heard a number of raps when I was in bed and I began to talk to Eldred, and asked him to rap twice if he was ever going to show himself to me. Almost immediately two raps came; I waited a long time but saw nothing. Then I went to sleep. Afterwards I woke up and looked round and saw Eldred on the bed beside me, he was wearing his blue suit. I sat up and started talking to him, [Miss Highett records what she said, and that “his lips started to move” and made a reply “just above a whisper”]. I then tried to touch him, but my hand went through him, and like a fool I started to cry, and he disappeared.<sup>79</sup>

This single case contains almost everything we need by way of evidence for the afterlife: two apparitions at the approximate time of death before the fact is known, or even guessed at; two apparitions after death has been established; a premonition; and two evidential mediumistic communications. Each experience on its own is vulnerable to being casually dismissed – coincidence, indigestion, etc. – but together, experienced by people separated by continents, but all bearing on the same person, they are nigh unassailable. What reason could anyone have to doubt any of the principal witnesses?

The Bowyer-Bowers were an upper-class family at a time when honour and reputation were still important, with a tradition of military service: Eldred, his brother, father and grandfather were, or had been, soldiers. Both Dorothy and Cecily had already decided not to mention what had happened to them: the full details only came to light after Æta talked about her visit to Mrs. Brittain, otherwise they would have remained silent. Æta herself was reticent in mentioning her own apparitional experience. Both Dorothy and Margaret initially sought non-paranormal explanations. There was no attempt to gain publicity or any secondary gain out of their experiences. It was only the work Hubert Wales (1870–1943) in gathering the letters and statements together that brought the case to wider notice in the SPR’s *Journal*, which was only circulated among members and not on general sale, so the publication of the case was anything but sensationalistic. In the report, Wales is described as having been a member of the SPR “for several years.” His interest seems only to have

<sup>78</sup> Letter dated June 12, 1918, “L. 1223,” pp. 45-6.

<sup>79</sup> Letter dated Jan. 4, 1918, “L. 1223,” p. 46.

been to gather and make available to the SPR the facts of the case: he was not credited as the author of the report.<sup>80</sup>

### *“Mere Chance Cannot Explain”*

This type of phenomenon has come to be called a “crisis apparition” after the work of the early SPR researchers. In the introduction to the SPR’s monumental two-volume work on the subject of *Phantasms of the Living* by Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers and Frank Podmore, Myers wrote:

Testimony proves that phantasms (impressions, voices, or figures) of persons undergoing some crisis,—especially death,—are perceived by their friends and relatives with a frequency which mere chance cannot explain.<sup>81</sup>

The testimony referred to involved “over two thousand depositions” of which more than half described crisis-type apparitions. According to a study by Hornell Hart, almost everyone who experiences this class of phenomenon – apparitions of people who were dead or close to death at the time of the appearance – recognizes them (85%). Sometimes the apparition was seen more than once (26%), or by two or more people at the same time. Other than signalling their own death, some cases also revealed additional information that was also later found to be true (8%).<sup>82</sup> The crisis apparition occurs close to the time of crisis, but, as in the Bowyer-Bower case, related experiences can occur quite some time after it, and, as we shall see, involve a number of different elements.

### **After-Death Communication**

The range reported of apparently intentional contact between living and deceased, covering sound, smell and touch, as well as full-blown apparitions, has led to a new term “after-death communication.”<sup>83</sup> The element of communication is key, but this can be interpreted as any sort of

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80 Wales wrote several novels in his lifetime, his first was published in 1918, as well as contributions on psychical research, including “Report on a Series of Cases of Apparent Thought-Transference Without Conscious Agency,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 31 (1920), pp. 127-217, and “Modern Science and ‘Survival,’” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 27 (1931), pp. 135-6.

81 Edmund Gurney, Frederic W.H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living*, vol. I (London: Trübner, 1886), p. lxvi.

82 H. Hornell Hart, et al., “Six Theories About Apparitions,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 50 (1956), pp. 153-239. He also found that there is usually a strong emotional relationship between the witness and the apparition (70%).

83 The term was introduced by Bill Guggenheim and Judy Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995). Guggenheim and Guggenheim originally defined an ADC as a “spiritual experience that occurs when someone is contacted directly and spontaneously by a deceased family member or friend” (p. 16), although current usage no longer uses the term “spiritual,” e.g., the definition in Evelyn Elsaesser, Chris A. Roe, Callum E. Cooper and David Lorimer, *Investigation of the Phenomenology and Impact of Spontaneous and Direct After-Death Communications (ADCs): Research Findings* (Privately published, 2020), p. 1: “A spontaneous and direct After-Death Communication (ADC) occurs when a person unexpectedly perceives a deceased person through a variety of sensory perceptions, i.e. through sight, hearing, smell, or touch.”

sign that is taken as communication, typically between the deceased and someone who was known to them in life, and is taken as a sign of continued existence after death.

High levels of ADCs have been reported in the research.<sup>84</sup> Before publishing their 1995 book, the Guggenheims had received 3,300 firsthand accounts of ADCs through their website. One meta-analysis of thirty-five studies published from 1894 to 2005 involved 50,682 participants from twenty-four countries, to give an estimate of 30–35% spontaneous incidence of ADCs in the general population, with 70-80% of the bereaved having an ADC within a year of bereavement, concluding that “ADCs are both common and normal.”<sup>85</sup> A study published in 2020 estimated an incidence of 40–50% in the general population.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, a therapeutic approach found that about 75% of people can have an induced ADC.<sup>87</sup>

While many of these experiences are personally convincing, they do not always offer objective evidence of the survival of consciousness beyond death. The SPR’s Census produced eighty firsthand accounts of “death-coincidences” – recognized apparitions occurring within twelve hours of death, typically in such cases the witness is unaware that the person seen has died. The authors of the report concluded that apparitions of the deceased occurring at the time of death could not be due to chance alone,<sup>88</sup> noting that this confirmed Gurney et al.’s earlier conclusion that “apparitions at death, &c., are a result of something beyond chance.”<sup>89</sup>

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84 The psychical researcher and criminologist Prof. Donald West in his role as the SPR’s official Research Officer in the 1940s used the original Census question to conduct a similar survey of 1,519 people, see Donald West, “A Mass Observation Questionnaire on Hallucinations,” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 34 (1948), pp. 187-196. However, the door to more mainstream medical research on this subject was opened by W.D. Rees, “Hallucinations of Widowhood,” *British Medical Journal*, 4 (1971), pp. 37-41. For the levels of experiences reported, see R.A. Kalish and D.K. Reynolds, “Widows View Death: A Brief Research Note,” *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, 5 (1974), pp. 187-192.; J. Burton, “Contact with the Dead: A Common Experience,” *Fate*, 34.4 (1982), pp. 65-72; Anna Castelnovo, Simone Cavallotti, Orsola Gambini, and Armando D’Agostino, “Post-Bereavement Hallucinatory Experiences: A Critical Overview of Population and Clinical Studies,” *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 186 (2015), pp. 266-274.

85 Jenny Streit-Horn, “A Systematic Review on After-Death Communication (ADC),” PhD thesis, University of North Texas, 2011, pp. 46, 47, 53, although giving a higher incidence among the bereaved of 80–85% based on different criteria on p. 54, conclusion on p. 62.

86 Evelyn Elsaesser, Chris Roe, Callum E. Cooper, and David Lorimer, *Investigation of the Phenomenology and Impact of Spontaneous and Direct After-Death Communications (ADCs): Research Findings* (Privately Published, 2020).

87 See A.L. Botkin, and R.C. Hogan, *Induced After Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Traumatic Loss* (Newburyport, MA: Hampton Roads, 2005); and A.L. Botkin, and M.T. Hannah, “Psychotherapeutic Outcomes Reported by Therapists Trained in Induced After-Death Communication,” *Journal of Near Death Studies*. 81.4 (Summer, 2013).

88 “Report on the Census,” p. 393. Note that these 80 accounts were whittled down to 62, according to their stringent criteria, p. 398. The 12 hour cut off point was of necessity an arbitrary one, and the authors note that another 5 apparitions occurred beyond this time frame but still before the witness knew that the person was dead, p. 401.

Vincent's re-analysis of the Guggenheims' published cases identified 65 out of 353 as "evidential cases" (18.4%).<sup>90</sup> Vincent's own analysis of 1,667 cases from the After-Death Communication Research Foundation database, identified 336 (20.1%) as evidential: 180 (10.8%) where the apparition was seen before the witness knew that person was dead; 99 (5.9%) in which apparitions conveyed information unknown to the witness that was later verified; and 57 (3.4%) involving multiple witnesses. A study by Elsaesser et al., identified 20.9% of cases as involving a shared ADC, with the receipt of information previously unknown being a factor in 24.3% of cases.<sup>91</sup> This study also found that 20.7% had had a "crisis ADC" within twenty-four hours of death (before or after), noting that "they are particularly significant, and even evidential, since experiencers claim that they have been informed of the death of a family member or friend by the deceased themselves."<sup>92</sup> Most of the ADCs in this study occurred to people during the day and whilst they were awake.<sup>93</sup>

Evidentiality was relatively consistent, ranging from 18.4% to 24.3%. These were not laboratory experiments designed to give evidence of the afterlife, but personal experiences probably intended to provide reassurance to loved ones, nevertheless, it is striking how many of them are evidential and are so in a number of different ways. As Prof. Erlendur Haraldsson concluded after his own ADC survey, "When all the accounts we have collected are considered, it seems impossible to reject all of them as deceptions and mistaken perceptions. Something real is there."<sup>94</sup>

### **Consciousness Beyond the Living Body**

A surprising finding of the SPR's Census was that many 'apparitions' were not 'spirits of the dead,' but actually living people. This realization should open a whole avenue of research: if the living could accidentally be seen as ghosts, could anyone do it intentionally?

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89 Gurney, et al. *Phantasms of the Living*, vol. I, p. xii, although the authors were still debating the telepathic explanation.

90 Ken R. Vincent, "Study of Evidential After-Death Communications," *De Numine*, 70 (Spring, 2021), pp. 4-6.

91 Most often the person was alone at the time (62%), so the opportunity for multiple witnesses arose less often. It would have been interesting to cross-tabulate the two questions on the number of people present and the number of people experiencing the ADC, but we can roughly see that, where more than one person was present, then in about two-thirds of cases they also experienced the ADC. Elsaesser, et al., *Investigation*, pp. 12, 15.

92 Elsaesser, et al., *Investigation*, p. 9.

93 My re-analysis of Elsaesser, et al., *Investigation*, pp. 11-2, found that 52.3% were awake and 57.6% occurred during the day.

94 Erlendur Haraldsson, *The Departed Among the Living: An Investigative Study of Afterlife Encounters* (Hove: White Crow Books, 2012), p. 233. Haraldsson's study was included in Streit-Horn's meta-analysis. See also Kean, *Surviving Death*, pp. 224-246, for an overview of some other research and suggestive experiences. The ADC category tends to blur previous distinctions between apparitions, crisis apparitions, and hauntings.

*Unexpected Visitors*

In 1890, Joseph Kirk of Plumstead, London, decided to become a ghost, or, as he put it, attempt a “telepathic experiment” upon Miss G., a young lady of his acquaintance. From June 10 to 20 that year, Kirk concentrated each evening on making himself visible to the unsuspecting Miss G. She later complained of disturbed sleep and feeling “uneasy” at night. Disappointed and a little guilty, Kirk decided to leave off, but had another go on June 23. This time Miss G. confessed to having had a very peculiar experience: “seeing Mr. Kirk standing near my chair, dressed in a dark brown coat, which I had frequently seen him wear.”<sup>95</sup>

Mr. Kirk’s coat was a key piece of evidence. He was, he explained, in the habit of wearing a light coat in the office, but as this had been sent to the tailor to be repaired, he was wearing his dark jacket, matching his suit of distinctive “dark reddish-brown check stuff.” Kirk used this fact to test the veracity of Miss G.’s vision. “How was I dressed?” he later asked, noting that this was not a leading question. He was wearing a light suit at the time and Miss G. touched the sleeve of his jacket, saying “Not this coat, but that dark suit you wear sometimes. I even saw clearly the small check pattern of it.” And therein rests the case for the defence, except that Miss G. also added that “I saw your features as plainly as though you had been bodily present. I could not have seen you more distinctly.”<sup>96</sup>

Here is a deliberate attempt to visibly appear before another person, unbeknownst to them, subsequently confirmed with additional evidential details. SPR researcher Frank Podmore collected this and several more such examples, including the Rev. Clarence Godfrey, who projected himself into a lady’s bedroom in 1886, and Mr. H. Percy Sparks who projected his friend Mr. Arthur H.W. Cleave into the dining-room of a young lady in Wandsworth. Cleave’s abilities outshone those of Godfrey: not only did he make himself visible to the target, but was conscious of what happened whilst he was there.<sup>97</sup>

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95 “Experimental Thought-Transference from a Distance, with Apparition of Agent,” *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*, 5 (February, 1891), pp. 21-30.

96 “Experimental Thought-Transference,” p. 24. This was only the more dramatic example in a series of experiments Mr. Kirk had been conducting on Miss G. over the years. He was apparently able to pull the bedclothes away from her face, cause the sound of her bedroom door bursting open, make his presence felt, and cause her to see various shapes and lights, all without her knowing in advance that he was trying to produce these effects. The range, then, covers, not just “telepathic experiments,” but psychokinetic ones as well, producing sight, sound and the movement of objects, all whilst not physically present.

97 Frank Podmore, *Apparitions and Thought-Transference: An Examination of the Evidence for Telepathy* (London: Walter Scott Ltd, 1894).

*“Distant Clairvoyance”*

As well as self-projectionists, others had discovered that they could send their subjects out of their bodies. In the 1840s, the British physician Joseph Haddock (1800–1861) discovered what he called “distant clairvoyance” during investigations into hypnotism (then generally considered under the heading of Mesmerism). Working with a subject called Emma L., a domestic servant in her twenties, he asked her to describe one of Haddock’s female relatives in London whilst she was mesmerized in Bolton, 174 miles (279 km) away as the crow flies. She was apparently successful in this, but puzzled Haddock by going on to describe a lady in a grand building, which to him sounded like Buckingham Palace (he tested this by asking if she saw any soldiers, to which she replied that she did). He later discovered that his relative – the target of the experiment – had been thinking of the Queen at the time. Emma’s distant clairvoyance had seemingly followed the target’s line of thought. “It appeared,” wrote Haddock, “as if her mind partially left her body, *to go to the place sought.*”<sup>98</sup> There are many more such accounts in the Mesmerist literature from this period.<sup>99</sup>

I discovered a similar case in the British Library that had escaped being published or discussed in the hundred plus years since being documented in 1915.<sup>100</sup> It involved Francis Gilbert Scott (1868–1933), a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, and of the SPR, who had conducted a series of experiments in hypnotism on his maid in an effort to improve her work. He accidentally discovered that, whilst in trance, she could apparently leave her body and visit her sweetheart Edgar, who was serving on the Western Front, approximately 200 miles away. Further experiments included visiting the maid’s cousin Bruce, also at the front. Her observations, always involving incidents that could not have been realistically guessed beforehand, were later confirmed by post.

In both cases, reputable medical men conducted the experiments, which, although informal in character, showed no indication of being deceptive or mercenary. The level of unexpected detail

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98 Joseph W. Haddock, *Somnolism and Psycheism; or, The Science of the Soul and the Phenomena of Nervation* (London: James S. Hodson, 1851), pp. 105-107, italics in the original. Haddock’s experiments with Emma included using hypnosis as an anaesthetic during two operations to remove teeth, induction of trance at a distance and her accurately describing pictures in books with her eyes closed (and on occasion taped shut and bandaged). In connection with the latter, Haddock discovered that these representations were experienced as real, such that a picture of a prickly plant would be experienced as though it had pricked her (p. 100). Haddock also noted the effect of sceptics, who, when present, would depress Emma’s powers (p. 102).

99 For example, see the case of Bruno Binet in L.A. Cahagnet, *The Celestial Telegraph; or, Secrets of the Life to Come, Revealed Through Magnetism*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: J.S. Redfield, 1851), p. 19; and the French clairvoyant Aleix Didier in his book *Le sommeil magnétique expliqué par le somnambule Alexis en état de lucidité* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1856), p. 15.

100 See Leo Ruickbie, *Angels in the Trenches: Superstition, Spiritualism and the Supernatural During the First World War* (London: Robinson, 2018); a fuller account was given in Leo Ruickbie, “What the Maid Saw: A Case of Remote Viewing During the First World War,” paper presented at the 43rd Annual International Conference of the Society for Psychical Research, Leicester, 20-22 September 2019.

makes sensory cueing or subjective validation unlikely explanations. That these details were independently confirmed also demonstrates that the experiences were not hallucinatory. Emma and Scott's maid really did seem to be out of their bodies.

### *Out-of-Body Experiences*

Ideas of a second, or 'subtle' body can be traced back to Antiquity, and are found in the remote past of other cultures.<sup>101</sup> Much research was done on "travelling clairvoyance," "doubles" astral bodies, "extracorporeal action," and "astral projection,"<sup>102</sup> but it was not until 1943 that such phenomena were classified as the now more familiar "out-of-body experience" (OBE) by G.N.M. Tyrrell – a term adopted and popularized by Celia Green and Robert Monroe, among others.<sup>103</sup>

Sylvan Muldoon described passing through physical things and beings during his "astral projections," and a later study of 1,007 OBErs found that 38% experienced "self-permeability," i.e., the ability to pass through physical objects.<sup>104</sup> In addition, 40% reported seeing themselves (autoscopy) whilst having an OBE – other studies have reported 56–82% for this experience.<sup>105</sup> An online survey of 16,185 OBErs found that 62% were associated with lucid dreams, and 49% involved "seeing through closed eyelids." Almost half had some sort of encounter, either "seeing or feeling the presence of an unknown physical being" (22%), or "seeing, hearing or speaking to a

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101 See G.R.S. Mead, *The Doctrine of the Subtle Body in Western Tradition* (London: J. M. Watkins., 1919); with further historical comments by Carlos S. Alvarado, "Does Something Leave the Body? (OBE Historical Perspectives)." *Psi Encyclopedia* (London: The Society for Psychical Research, 2019), <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/does-something-leave-body-obe-historical-perspectives>, accessed July 23, 2021.

102 Sir William Barrett, *Death-Bed Visions* (London: Rider, 1926), refers to "travelling clairvoyance" as a term used by "the older Mesmerists." For the earlier research, see Albert de Rochas, "Les fantômes des vivants," *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, 5 (1895), pp. 257-275; Hector Durville, "Experimental Researches Concerning Phantoms of the Living," *Annals of Psychical Science*, 7 (1908), pp. 335-343; and Alexander Aksakof, *Animisme et spiritisme* (Paris: Librairie des sciences psychiques, 1895), p. 322. The terminology of an "astral body" may originate with H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II. Theology (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1877), p. 588. Sylvan J. Muldoon and Hereward Carrington, *The Projection of the Astral Body* (London: Rider, 1929), quotation from p. 212; Sylvan Muldoon, *The Case for Astral Projection: Hallucination or Reality?* (Chicago: Aries Press, 1936); and Sylvan Muldoon and Hereward Carrington, *The Phenomena of Astral Projection* (London: Rider, 1951).

103 G.N.M. Tyrrell, *Apparitions* (London: Duckworth, 1943), p. 149; Celia Green, *Out-of-the-Body Experiences* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968); and Robert Monroe, *Journeys Out of the Body* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971).

104 Wagner Alegretti and Nanci Trivellato, paper presented at the 1st International Forum of Consciousness Research, Barcelona, 1999. The study involved 1,185 participants, but only 1,007 reported having had an OBE – it is not clear why non-experiencers took part in the survey; however, the statistics are only based on those claiming to have had OBEs.

105 Palmer's two samples returned 56% and 62% for autoscopy, see John Palmer, "A Community Mail Survey of Psychic Experiences," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 73 (1979), pp. 221–251; Green's sample returned 82%, see Green, *Out-of-the-Body*.

deceased loved one” (24%) – Monroe described several encounters with the deceased.<sup>106</sup> One study included cases of OBEs reporting events from past lives (15%),<sup>107</sup> potentially linking the experience with reincarnation.

Over the years many people have attempted to test whether OBEs are really out of the body.<sup>108</sup> Durville described holding a piece of paper with large letters printed on it in front of the half-open eyes of a hypnotized subject, Marthe – she claimed she could see nothing, but when the paper was placed before her “double,” specifically at the nape of the neck, she then proceeded to read it without difficulty.<sup>109</sup> Charles Tart conducted experiments with “Miss Z,” placing a random five-digit number on a shelf above her bed whilst she slept and attempted to leave her body. On the final night of the trial she read the number correctly.<sup>110</sup> Osis and McCormick apparently successfully tested Dr. Alex Tanous’s ability to leave his body.<sup>111</sup>

In his report to the US Army Operational Group in 1983 concerning the “Gateway Experience” (a Monroe Institute programme), Lieutenant Colonel Wayne M. McDonnell, Commander Det. O, wrote that “human consciousness can, with enough practice, move beyond the dimension of time-space and interface with other energy systems in other dimensions.” McDonnell reported that the technique could also be used to “travel” into the past and future. During his training at the Monroe Institute one of the trainers told him that “numerous experiments have been conducted involving persons moving from one coast [of the USA] to the other in the out-of-body state to read a series of ten computer generated numbers in a university laboratory [...] most have acquired enough of the

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106 See “OBE Survey Results,” <https://astralinfo.org/survey-results/> (undated), accessed July 22, 2021, published in William Buhlman, *The Secret of the Soul: Using Out-of-Body Experiences to Understand Our True Nature* (New York, HarperOne, 2001); Monroe, *Journeys*.

107 Carlos S. Alvarado, “Phenomenological Aspects of Out-of-Body Experiences: A Report of Three Studies,” *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 78 (1984), pp. 219–240.

108 Carlos S. Alvarado, “ESP During Out-of-Body Experiences: A Review of Experimental Studies,” *Journal of Parapsychology*, 46 (1982), pp. 209–230. Early examples include the work of Albert de Rochas, “New Experiments Relative to the Astral Body and the Magnetic ‘Rapport,’” *Annals of Psychical Science*, 4 (1906), pp. 120–125, which is particularly important for its discussion of rapport as well as an account of some tests; and H. Durville, “Experimental Researches Concerning Phantoms of the Living,” *Annals of Psychical Science*, 7 (1908), pp. 335–343.

109 Durville, “Experimental Researches,” p. 341. Physical effects apparently produced by “doubles” were also recorded, including the movement of objects, rapping sounds and the infliction of pain as if from a physical effect (a blow to the head, standing on the feet).

110 Charles T. Tart, “A Psychophysiological Study of Out-of-the Body Experiences,” *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 62 (1968), pp. 3–27; see also Charles T. Tart, “Six Studies of Out-of-Body Experiences,” *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 17.2 (1998), pp. 73–99.

111 K. Osis, and D. McCormick, “Kinetic Effects at the Ostensible Location of an Out-of-Body Projection During Perceptual Testing,” *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 74 (1980), pp. 319–329.

digits to make clear that their consciousness was present.”<sup>112</sup> Experiments such as these were part of the US government’s long-running research into remote viewing, Project Star Gate.<sup>113</sup>

More recently, Patrizio Tressoldi and colleagues conducted experiments with a group of five OBErs, with the group scoring considerably above chance in correctly identifying the target images at a location approximately 190 km away. They stated that “All participants reported a phenomenological experience of a disembodied personal selfhood able to perceive simply by an act of will without the physical limitation of eyesight, to move in the environment instantaneously and exist in a sort of three dimensional world with no awareness of time.”<sup>114</sup> Tressoldi’s paper was rejected by the journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* because, among other things, the findings violated “the basic laws of physics as they are currently understood,” which was surely the point.<sup>115</sup>

In addition to a hundred years’ worth of successful experiments, supporting evidence comes from other avenues. According to Jeffrey Long’s NDERF survey, an out-of-body experience was the most common feature of an NDE, being reported in three-quarters (75.4%) of all cases – Greyson and Stevenson had earlier found 70%.<sup>116</sup> Other studies have shown that as many as a quarter (22–25%) of people have spontaneous out-of-body experiences, that is, without having to be “near death” at the time.<sup>117</sup>

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112 Wayne M. McDonnell, Analysis and Assessment of Gateway Experience," Department of the Army, US Army Operational Group, US Army Intelligence and Security Command, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, June 9, 1983, Approved for Release 2003, Stargate Collection, CREST, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP96-00788R001700210016-5.pdf>, pp. 14, 23, accessed July 23, 2021.

113 The declassified files have now been released, unedited, by the CIA; for the complete edited version, see Edwin C. May, and Sonali Bhatt Marwaha, *The Star Gate Archives: Reports of the United States Government Sponsored Psi Program, 1972-1995*, 4 vols (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2018); with accessible overviews published by Sonali Marwaha, “Star Gate: The US Government Programme on Psi Research, Part 1,” *Paranormal Review*, 94 (2020), pp. 4-13; and Sonali Marwaha, “Star Gate: The US Government Programme on Psi Research, Part 2: Operational Psi,” *Paranormal Review*, 95 (2020), pp. 4-13. I had the pleasure of taking part in some informal remote viewing experiments with remote viewing expert Maj. (ret) Paul H. Smith (Project Star Gate 1983–1990) at the Society for Psychical Research’s conference in Leicester in 2019, with some interesting results, see Leo Ruickbie, “Leicester Through the Looking Glass,” *Paranormal Review*, 92 (2019), pp. 14-21.

114 Patrizio E. Tressoldi, Luciano Pederzoli, Patrizio Caini, Alessandro Ferrini, Simone Melloni, Diana Richeldi, Florentina Richeldi, and Alice Trabucco, “Out of Body Experience Induced by Hypnotic Suggestion: Phenomenology and Perceptual Characteristics,” (2014), published online <https://www.evanlab.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1e-Out-of-Body-Experience-induced-by-hypnotic-suggestion.-Part-1.pdf>, accessed July 24, 2021.

115 The paper was rejected by several more journals, including *Frontiers in Consciousness Research*, for similar reasons.

116 Bruce Greyson, and Ian Stevenson, “The Phenomenology of Near-Death Experiences,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 137 (1980), pp. 1193-1196 – this study was also smaller, with 78 cases analysed, but nonetheless an important milestone in research.

117 Two studies, one Dutch, one US, cited in Pim van Lommel, *Consciousness Beyond Life: The Science of the Near-Death Experience* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), p. 77.

## Consciousness After Unconsciousness

Within four hours of developing symptoms of acute bacterial meningoenzephalitis in the early hours of the morning on November 10, 2008, Dr. Eben Alexander III was in a coma. He was put on a ventilator, with an estimated chance of survival of less than 10%. Over the next seven days his chances of survival declined further. Brain scans showed pus filling the grooves of his cerebral cortex and the membrane covering his brain. But on the seventh day, he opened his eyes.<sup>118</sup>

An experienced neurosurgeon, Alexander had heard of NDEs, but up until that day he awoke from a coma that should have been fatal he had dismissed them all as hallucinations. Afterwards he said: “My coma taught me many things. First and foremost, near-death experiences, and related mystical states of awareness, reveal crucial truths about the nature of existence.”

One truth, somewhat more mundane than mystical, but carrying evidential value, was the “guardian angel” who guided Alexander through his experience. Alexander was adopted when only four months old, escaping his unwed mother’s poverty to grow up in the home of a successful neurosurgeon, Eben Alexander II. Months after his experience, he was shown a photograph of Betsy, his birth sister, and recognised his “guardian angel.” The unusual thing is, this was the first time he had seen Betsy and she had died before he found out about his genetic family.

Since publishing his experiences in the *New York Times* bestseller *Proof of Heaven*, attempts have been made to tarnish Alexander’s reputation and undermine his credibility in respect of the claims made in the book.<sup>119</sup> Alexander has been subjected to a public trial, with the self-appointed prosecution calling its own character witnesses against him. However, it is not Alexander’s

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118 Eben Alexander, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey Into the Afterlife* (2012), with a description of his case at <http://ebenalexander.com/about/my-experience-in-coma/>. The standard medical measure of consciousness is the Glasgow Coma Scale, a diagnostic technique to score the degree of consciousness from 3–15, with 15 indicating full consciousness, and a score of 3 to 8 indicating coma. Alexander had a score of 8 on admission, indicating, in addition to coma, “severe brain injury” (p. 25).

119 Predictably, arch-sceptic Michael Shermer, with “Proof of Hallucination,” *Scientific American* (April, 2013), was the among the first to try and trash Alexander’s account, arguing that because his NDE was like a hallucination, it was a hallucination. Then came Luke Dittrich, “The Prophet,” *Esquire* (July 2, 2013), who dug up the dirt, revealing that Alexander had faced several lawsuits for malpractice, that there were some inconsistencies in his published account, and even threw in a meeting with the Dalai Lama, as if his off-the-cuff remarks were also evidence. And building on these, an article by Esther Zuckerman in *The Atlantic* (July 2, 2013) announced “The ‘Proof of Heaven’ Author Has Now Been Thoroughly Debunked by Science.” In connection with these, it is important to read the refutation of Dittrich’s account by Robert Mays, “Esquire Article on Eben Alexander Distorts the Facts” (August 12, 2013), <https://www.iands.org/ndes/more-info/ndes-in-the-news/970-esquire-article-on-eben-alexander-distorts-the-facts.html>, where he convincingly shows that the Dalai Lama’s comments were edited to present an opinion on Alexander that was contrary to his actual opinion. Shermer’s sceptical beliefs received a shock when he himself experienced something inexplicable and potentially paranormal when a broken radio with a sentimental connection to his bride-to-be played music before their wedding that forced him to adopt a more open mind (“Infrequencies,” *Scientific American*, 311.4 (October, 2014), p. 97).

character that is in question. His credibility may be weakened, but most of the allegations do not directly relate to his NDE and those that do are either circumstantial or simply the opinions of people who were not present nor qualified to judge a medical case. Although the book went on to become a bestseller and saved his career, there was no way of his knowing that at the time and a fabricated story about an NDE simply to make money would have been a long shot at best, easily recognizable as such and difficult to maintain in the long term. On the contrary, Alexander's case has been independently reviewed and verified (including confirmation that his NDE took place during a phase of deepest coma) by a team of experts, including Dr. Bruce Greyson, who really has no need to risk his career and reputation supporting a bogus claim.<sup>120</sup> Even if shown to be false, it in no way undermines the testimony of others who have had similar experiences.

### **Consciousness After Death**

I am sitting in the room where my mother died as I write this. Her ashes are in an urn in the corner of this room in a house in a little village in the south of France. I was not sure if I would be able to sit here and write *this* essay. Some days after I started, I was telling my father about an online lecture by Dr. James Lake on NDEs that I had just attended, when he mentioned that my mother had once told him that whilst in hospital she had experienced a bright white light drawing her towards it, knowing that if she went into it she would never return. She had fought it, saying 'no, I'm not ready,' and returned to live for a few years more, just long enough to get to know her grandchildren.

#### *The Actual-Death Experience*

The next thing I recall was the sound: It was a Natural 'D.' As I listened to the sound, I felt it was pulling me out of the top of my head. The further out of my body I got, the more clear the tone became. I had the impression it was like a road, a frequency that you go on [...] I remember seeing several things in the operating room when I was looking down. It was the most aware that I think that I have ever been in my entire life [...] I was metaphorically sitting on [the doctor's] shoulder. It was not like normal vision. It was brighter and more focused and clearer than normal vision [...] There was so much in the operating room that I didn't recognize, and so many people.

The case of Pam Reynolds (1956–2010), who underwent surgery for a life-threatening condition in 1991 aged thirty-five, is one of the most detailed and best authenticated examples of what is

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120 Surbhi Khanna, Lauren E. Moore, and Bruce Greyson, "Full Neurological Recovery from *Escherichia coli* Meningitis Associated with Near-Death Experience," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 206.9 (September 2018), pp. 744-747.

usually called a near-death experience;<sup>121</sup> however, Reynolds was not near death, she was categorically dead.

In order to remove an intracranial aneurysm in the basilar artery – weakness in the arterial wall had caused a huge, life-threatening bubble to develop – that was of a size and position to make other procedures too risky, neurosurgeon Dr. Robert F. Spetzler was called in to use the pioneering method of deep hypothermic cardiac arrest. After being rendered unconscious with anaesthetics, she was cooled to around 20°C (68°F), her heart stopped beating, her lungs stopped breathing, her brain stopped functioning (electro-cerebral silence), the blood was drained from inside her skull. All her vital signs were flatlined. She was clinically dead. There were no signs of life, yet she saw and heard things. There was no brain activity, yet she was conscious.

The sound that seemed to prompt her leaving her body was that of the surgical saw Spetzler was about to use to cut open her skull. She thought the saw looked like an electric toothbrush and noted a dent in it, and its interchangeable blades in a “socket wrench case.” She had expected that the doctors would shave her whole head, but saw instead that only a patch had been shaved. She heard a female voice – she thought it may have been a Dr. Murray – talking about her veins and arteries: they were “very small,” apparently. Most of the tools and instruments she did not recognize, but she saw a heart-lung machine and “didn’t like the respirator.”

Reynolds went on to have a very vivid experience in which she met deceased relatives, but the only testable pieces of information relate to her description of the operating theatre – a description she should not have been able to make under the circumstance. They were all confirmed.

It should only take one case like that of Pam Reynolds for us to rethink the mind–brain problem, if not immediately abandon the current orthodox position that states that the brain produces the mind, but there has been more than one.

Although the term “near-death experience” was only coined in 1975 by Raymond Moody, people had certainly been reporting such experiences for a long time. Moody’s own interest in the subject began in 1965 when he heard a clinical professor of psychiatry (surely a credible witness) relate his own experience. By the time Moody came to write his groundbreaking book, *Life After Life*, he had about 150 NDE cases, and that was only the start.

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121 See Michael Sabom, *Light and Death: One Doctor’s Fascinating Account of Near-Death Experiences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

The term is not accurate: although some cases do indeed involve experiences when the body is near death, others involve experiences when the body is actually dead; and when we say ‘experiences’ we mean consciousness because only something conscious can have experiences. It is not a near-death experience but post-mortem consciousness. If we more accurately reframe the terms like this, then it becomes immediately apparent that evidence of consciousness after clinical death is evidence of the survival of consciousness after the death of the physical body.<sup>122</sup>

What constitutes ‘best’ is precisely that they had actually died, and through the wonders of modern medicine were resuscitated, and then recalled memories from a period when their bodies, including their brains, were not functioning – that is, ordinarily unable to produce memories, the unique ability of consciousness, if consciousness is created by the brain. And then not only that, astonishing as it is, but described events that were independently confirmed – events that they should not have been aware of if consciousness is created by the brain. We have to take these experiences seriously because they are consistent across time and culture: they are not fantasy constructs that somehow get lucky, they are real.<sup>123</sup>

The number of ‘best’ NDE cases is staggering. In addition to Reynolds and Alexander, other cases often cited include that of Al Sullivan. A fifty-five year-old truck driver, Sullivan was undergoing triple-bypass surgery when his consciousness separated from his body. Sullivan saw the surgeon perform an unusual arm flapping motion with his hands tucked into his armpits and encountered his mother and brother-in-law, both deceased, who told him to tell his neighbours that their son, suffering from lymphoma, would recover – all subsequently confirmed.<sup>124</sup>

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122 The continued use of “near-death” has led those categorically opposed to the idea to argue that it is exactly that – “near” but not “actual,” even when we have the medical data to show death does occur – which allows them to cancel out the evidence presented, for an example of this see Anon., “The Undiscovered Country,” *British Medical Journal* (15 December 1979), p. 1530: “The near-dead are not dead.”

123 Michael Sabom compared reports of the resuscitation process from cardiac patients who were successfully resuscitated and claimed to have had an NDE with accounts from patients who had undergone a similar process but who had not had an NDE and were asked to imagine what a resuscitation looked like: the two differed considerably, such that Sabom concluded that those reporting NDEs were describing real events as opposed to imagined ones, see Michael Sabom, *Recollections of Death: A Medical investigation* (New York, Harper & Row, 1982). For cross-cultural studies, see C.B. Becker, “The Pure Land Revisited: Sino-Japanese Meditations and Near-Death Experiences of the Next World,” *Anabiosis: The Journal for Near-Death Studies*, 4.51 (1984); Feng Zhi-ying and Liu Jian-xun, “Near-Death Experiences Among Survivors of the 1976 Tangshan Earthquake,” *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 11.39 (1992); S. Pasricha, “A Systematic Survey of Near-Death Experiences in South India,” *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 7 (1993), pp. 161ff; S. Pasricha and I. Stevenson, “Near-Death Experiences in India: A Preliminary Report,” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 174 (1986), pp. 165ff. For an historical analysis, see C. Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experiences in Medieval and Modern Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

124 Emily Williams Cook, Bruce Greyson, and Ian Stevenson, “Do Any Near-Death Experiences Provide Evidence for the Survival of Human Personality after Death? Relevant Features and Illustrative Case Reports,” *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 12.3 (1998), pp. 377-406.

Kenneth Ring gathered thirty-one cases of blind people reporting seeing things during an NDE that were later verified as true.<sup>125</sup> Current medical science says that this is impossible, yet it happened thirty-one times, at least.

In 2000, before Alexander's remarkable experience, Bruce Greyson thought that Reynolds, Sullivan, and the blind sight examples were the most convincing cases of NDEs as evidence for survival after death.<sup>126</sup> Since then, of course, many more cases have come to light, including collective NDEs with shared OBEs.<sup>127</sup>

Although NDEs have been reported for centuries, modern medicine is constantly pushing back the irreversibility threshold of death. If Reynolds had lived and been diagnosed some years earlier, there would have been no treatment for her and hence no account of post-mortem consciousness. We are travelling further into death than any civilization has been able to do before. And the information people are bringing back is of a quality and depth never before achievable.

### **“Silent, Upon a Peak in Darien:” Deathbed Visions**

“The dying person, precisely at the moment of death, and when the power of speech was lost, or nearly lost, seemed to see something; or rather, to speak more exactly, to become conscious of something present (for actual sight is out of question) of a very striking kind, which remained invisible to and unperceived by the assistants.”<sup>128</sup>

Frances Cobbe likened this experience to that “peak in Darien” (Panama) whereon Cortez and his men, expecting to see a continent, beheld instead the vast Pacific ocean stretching to the horizon.<sup>129</sup> Writing in 1882, Cobbe found that almost every family could recall such a deathbed incident, the vision being of someone known to the dying who had pre-deceased them.

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125 Kenneth Ring and Sharon Cooper, *Mindsight: Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences in the Blind* (Palo Alto, CA: William James Center for Consciousness Studies/Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 1999).

126 Bruce Greyson, “Near Death Experiences as Evidence for Survival of Bodily Death,” paper presented at the Survival of Bodily Death Esalen Invitational Conference, Esalen, February 11-16, 2000.

127 May Eulitt ‘shared’ an NDE with two friends after being struck by lightning, see May Eulitt and Stephen Boyer, *Fireweaver: The Story of a Life, a Near-Death, and Beyond* (NP: Xlibris, 2001). Steven Ridenhour and his girlfriend had NDEs with similar content during accidental drowning, see P.M.H. Atwater, *Beyond The Light: The Mysteries and Revelations of Near-Death Experiences* (New York: Avon Books, 1994), pp. 60-63. John Hernandez described seeing others having NDEs during his own NDE following a firefighting accident, see Arvin S. Gibson, *Fingerprints of God* (NP: Self-published, 1996), pp. 128-131. Four hospital patients also had NDEs with similar distinctive content at different times, see P.M.H. Atwater, *Coming Back to Life: The After-Effects of the Near-Death Experience* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1988), pp. 14-16. A particularly striking case involving apparent mental interaction between NDEr and hospital staff was published during the writing of this paper, see Marjorie Woollacott and Bettina Peyton, “Verified Account of Near-Death Experience in a Physician Who Survived Cardiac Arrest,” *Explore*, 17.3 (May-June, 2021), pp. 213-219.

128 Frances Power Cobbe, *The Peak in Darien: An Octave of Essays* (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis, 1882), p. 253.

Almost 150 years later, Dr. Christopher Kerr studied end-of-life experiences involving 1,400 interviews with dying patients. He found that “over 80% reported at least one pre-death dream or vision described as more real than real and distinct from normal dreaming,” and for 72% this was a dream/vision of the deceased (friends, family, and pets). He found a correlation between the frequency of dreaming of the deceased and the nearness of death that had predictive value.<sup>130</sup> Although Kerr did not consider evidential aspects, his study proves that the experience itself is common and widespread.<sup>131</sup>

The typical case involves the familiar “*receptio ad mortem*,” to coin a phrase, a welcoming party composed of one or more deceased family members and sometimes friends. This in itself gives heart, that we should see in our final moments those most loved by us and that they are there to welcome us to the other side, even if only a delusion it is a comforting end; however, the delusional explanation is overthrown by the reporting of information that the dying should not ordinarily possess.

The most Scrooge-defying accounts of deathbed visions involve seeing people who are unknown to the dying person to have died. Cobbe recounted one such case, but since then many more have come to light.<sup>132</sup> When A.T. Baird collected a hundred of the best cases, he concluded

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129 The term comes from John Keats, “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer:” “[...] like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes / He stared at the Pacific—and all his men / Look’d at each other with a wild surmise— / Silent, upon a peak in Darien” (*The Poems of John Keats*, ed. Ernest De Sélincourt (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1905). p. 36). I had a nice coincidence during the writing of this paper. After moving some furniture in my study, I rediscovered an old book of poetry inherited from my grandmother that had been lost among the books – it may be twenty years since I actually *read* anything in this book. I put it by my bedside intending to read from it and later, on the evening of August 9<sup>th</sup> before going to sleep, I opened it exactly at this poem, the place marked by an old bus ticket from my and my grandmother’s hometown of Edinburgh. I must also confess that shortly before this, I had asked, if the afterlife were real, could someone “up there” not give me a sign. Around the same time, I got a reminder from an online card company telling me that my deceased mother’s birthday was coming up on August 12<sup>th</sup> – she was born in May (also in Edinburgh) and I cannot explain why I got this message.

130 Christopher Kerr, “I See Dead People: Dreams and Visions of the Dying,” TEDx Talks (2015); also featured in Ricki Stern (dir.), *Surviving Death*, Ep. 5: “Seeing Dead People,” Netflix (2021). Christopher Kerr, *Death is But a Dream: Finding Hope and Meaning in the End of Life* (New York: Avery, 2020).

131 Another recent study was conducted in Japan, see Tatsuya Morita, et al., “Nationwide Japanese Survey About Deathbed Visions: “My Deceased Mother Took Me to Heaven,”” *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 52.5 (Nov., 2016), pp. 646-654, also concluding that “deathbed vision is not an uncommon phenomenon.”

132 [Eleanor] Mrs. H. Sidgwick, “Notes on the Evidence, Collected by the Society, for Phantasms of the Dead,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 3 (1885), pp. 92-3; Edmund Gurney and Frederic W.H. Myers, “On Apparitions Occurring Soon After Death,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 5 (1889), pp. 459-460; Frederic W.H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Green, 1903), pp. 339-342; Hyslop, *Psychical Research and the Resurrection* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1908), pp. 88-9; Ernesto Bozzano, *Phenomenes Psychiques au Moment de la Mort* (Paris: Editions de la B.P.S., 1923), discussion and selected translation in Ronald K. Sieggel and Ada E. Hirschman, “Bozzano and the First Classification of Deathbed Visions: A Historical Note and Translation,” *Anabiosis*, 3.2 (December 1983), pp. 195-201; William Barrett, *Death-Bed Visions* (London: Methuen, 1926), pp. 10-26; Robert Crookall, *The Study and Practice of Astral Projection* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1966 [1960]), pp. 21-2; Karlis Osis and

that deathbed visions of this sort gave “the strongest support to the theory of the survival of human personality after bodily death.”<sup>133</sup>

### **Consciousness Without Consciousness**

People have conscious experiences outside of their physical bodies, unrestricted by the normal constraints of space. They have conscious experiences when unconscious, when the brain is damaged or diseased, and even when clinically dead. During these experiences they perceive physical surroundings, and living and dead people, although their eyes are closed, sometimes taped shut, and often unable to function due to the condition of the brain. The blind, even those born blind, can ‘see.’ And in many cases the experiencer recalls information that they should not normally have been able to acquire, and which is subsequently confirmed to be true. Sometimes the experience is shared among two or more people. This phenomenon is not restricted to so-called ‘near-death experiences,’ but covers a wide range of things variously called astral projection, travelling clairvoyance, out-of-body experiences – the exosomatic class – as well as remote viewing, and deathbed visions. The evidence comes from reliable and credible witnesses, with no prior motive in promoting the survival hypothesis.

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Erlendur Haraldsson, *At the Hour of Death*, rev. ed. (New York: Hastings House, 1986 [1971]), p. 166; Kenneth Ring, *Life at Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980), p. 208; M. Callanan and P. Kelley, *Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, and Communications of the Dying* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1992), pp. 86-7; Penny Sartori, *The Near-Death Experiences of Hospitalized Intensive Care Patients: A Five Year Clinical Study* (Lewiston, Scotland: Edwin Mellen, 2008), p. 300; Bruce Greyson, “Seeing Dead People Not Known to have Died: ‘Peak in Darien’ Experiences,” *Anthropology and Humanism*, 35.2 (2010), pp. 159-171.

133 Baird, *One Hundred*, p. 71.

## GHOSTS OF THE FUTURE

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It is all very well for Dickens to write of “the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come,” but it forces us to ask is it really possible to talk of ‘ghosts’ of the future?

### “Over the Bridge of Time”

In December 1925, the journalist Irene Corbally Kuhn (1898–1995) was walking down Michigan Boulevard (now Michigan Avenue) in Chicago. Just weeks before, the twenty-seven year-old had been in Shanghai working with her husband Bert Kuhn for the *China Press*, but after Sikh police had fired on a Chinese student protest, killing six, anti-foreign feeling was running high. There were strikes and riots as what became known as the May Thirtieth Movement led to a state of martial law. The Kuhns were in immediate danger. Both hard-nosed journalists, they might have stayed, but, with a two-year-old daughter to look after, it was decided that Irene should return to the USA with their child – Bert would remain (he was also secretly working for US Naval Intelligence).

Chicago in 1925 was mobster Al Capone’s city, but a walk down Michigan Boulevard was still a safer bet than Shanghai. What happened next stopped Kuhn in her tracks:

Suddenly and without warning, sky, boulevard, people, lake, everything vanished, wiping from my vision as completely and quickly as if I had been struck blind. Before me, as on a motion picture screen in a dark theatre, unrolled a strip of green grass within a fence of iron palings. Three young trees, in spring verdure, stood at one side; beyond the trees and the fence, in the far distance, factory smoke-stacks trailed sooty plumes across the sky. Across from the trees stood a small circle of people, men and women, a mere handful, in black clothes. And coming to a halt on a gravelled road by the grass was a limousine from which alighted two men who turned to offer their hands to a woman in black, emerging now from the car. The woman was I.

I watched myself being escorted against my will to the group which now parted to receive me. [...] at last I was among the others, and looked at the small hole cut in the grass – a hole not more than two feet square. [...] There was a small box which someone, bending over now, was placing in the earth with infinite tenderness – a box so small and light that I could hold it in my hand and hardly feel it. What was I doing here? Where was I? Why was I letting someone put this box in the ground – this little box which held something very precious to me? I couldn’t speak or move. These people – who were they to me? Then I recognized only the faces of my husband’s family, tear-stained and sad. The silence screamed and tore at me. I looked about. All the clan were there. Only he was missing. Then I knew what was in the box, and I crumpled on the grass without a sound.<sup>134</sup>

The vision lifted as suddenly as it had appeared and Kuhn found herself clutching a lamppost for support. She later brushed off the incident as an over active imagination triggered by her loneliness in the city.

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134 Irene Corbally Kuhn, *Assigned to Adventure* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1938), pp. 280-7.

Things had settled down in Shanghai, so she planned to return, boarding the *Empress of Canada* at Vancouver in February. Onboard she received a telegram: “Husband dangerously ill, best not sail.” The next telegram brought worse news: her husband had died on February 21, 1926, from “unknown causes.”<sup>135</sup>

The funeral was on May 30<sup>th</sup>. Kuhn travelled by limousine with her two brothers-in-law to Rosehill Cemetery, “which I had never seen before,” she said. When they arrived:

The men got out first and waited to help me. I put my foot on the ground, and something held me back. For a second I couldn't raise my eyes because I knew what I would see. At last I looked. There was the spring grass underfoot. There were the three young trees in fresh leaf; there the fence of iron palings, and the smoke-stacks of the city's industries far beyond in the distance. [...] Bert's brothers urged me forward gently. I saw the ring of black-clad mourners over to one side, waiting. I stopped.

“You didn't have to open a full grave, did you?” I asked.

“How do you know?” asked Paul with astonishment.

“There's just a little square hole big enough to take the box with Bert's ashes, isn't there?” I pressed on.

Paul's face was white beneath his natural tan. “Yes, that's right. They said it would be foolish to open a full grave for a small box of ashes. But how did you know?” he persisted.

I didn't answer. I was thinking of that December day on Michigan Boulevard when I had seen into the future, over the bridge of time.<sup>136</sup>

As a pioneering female journalist, with an established, if not enviable reputation, Kuhn risked more than she could hope to gain in telling this story, and it is unlikely that she invented it. It also seems to have been her only experience of this kind, so we can rule out any undiagnosed psychopathological condition. Before any court, Kuhn would be seen as a singularly credible and reliable witness.

A remarkable feature of this vision is that, although she was in it, Kuhn did not view the event from her future viewpoint, but stood outside it. One thinks of the viewpoint reported during OBEs (including NDEs) of a conscious observer looking at their own body from an external, independent position. Can we call what she saw ghosts? Surely we must, because, from her physical position in the present, the people she saw were not yet where she saw them, and did not yet do what she saw them do, yet she *saw* them, just as Martindale saw his apparitions of Roman soldiers from the past doing what they had done in the past.

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135 “Bert L. Kuhn,” *New York Times* (21 Feb., 1926), p. 18; Kuhn, *Assigned to Adventure*.

136 Kuhn, *Assigned to Adventure*, pp. 280-7.

## Before the Fact

Sensing the future – precognition (preknowledge) and premonition (forewarning) – often involves apparently ‘seeing’ the future and in doing so, seeing living people in the future, where and when they are not yet living. We also have to wonder where the consciousness of the person sensing the future is.

The literature on premonitions is as extensive as any other aspect being considered here. There have been premonitions of the sinking of the *Titanic*, the First World War (and events during it, such as the sinking of the *Lusitania*), the Second World War, the laser, even of a Third World War yet to unfold.<sup>137</sup> The famous “dream detective” Christopher Robinson, said to have dreamt of the Lockerbie bombing (1988), the mortar bomb attack on 10 Downing Street (1991), and the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, sent me notes of a dream he had on September 6, 2019:

In a cupboard – under stairs – with Nan [...] She got a bottle of Corona. She shook it up. Flipped open the top and it sprayed out everywhere. She said, Christopher, Corona is going to spread across the world killing up to half the population [...] <sup>138</sup>

During a BBC broadcast, the writer J.B. Priestley asked viewers to send him accounts of any experiences that appeared to contradict our normal understanding of time. He received over a thousand letters, after which point he stopped counting. Almost half (45%) were classic premonitions, apparent warnings relating to death, accident and disaster.<sup>139</sup>

### *Something Terrible is Going to Happen*

On October 14, 1966, Alexander Venn turned to his wife and said, “Something terrible is going to happen, and it won’t be far from here, either.” A sense of foreboding had oppressed him all day. An amateur artist, he turned to his sketchbook to express what he felt. He drew a human head surrounded by black, the impression of coal dust on his mind.<sup>140</sup>

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137 Mackenzie considers some of these in *Riddle*, pp. 47-70. A particularly good premonition of the sinking of the *Titanic*, with even something like an OBE during the dreamt premonition and corroboration from witnesses who heard the premonition before the event, see “P. 283. Premonitory Dream,” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 15 (June, 1912), pp. 264-268. For the First World War, see Ruickbie, *Angels in the Trenches*. For other examples, see Ruickbie, *A Brief Guide to the Supernatural* (London: Robinson, 2011).

138 Christopher Robinson, pers. com. February 10, 2021, some punctuation added for clarity. Given the time lapse, it has not been possible to corroborate this.

139 See J.B. Priestley, *Man and Time* (London: Doubleday, 1964).

140 Quotations for this story from Herbert B. Greenhouse, *Premonitions: A Leap Into the Future* (New York: Warner, 1973), pp. 13-15.

## *BICS Prize Essay Competition: The Ghost in the Time Machine*

He was not the only one to feel that “something terrible” was imminent. On Tuesday, October 17, a man in Kent became convinced that “On Friday something terrible connected with death is going to happen.” On Thursday morning, October 20, a woman woke in panic after a nightmare of being smothered in what she called “deep blackness.” Later that morning, nine-year-old Eryl Mai Jones said to her mother, “Mummy, let me tell you about my dream last night [...] I dreamed I went to school and there was no school. Something black had come down all over it!” At 9 p.m. that evening, Mrs. C. Milden was attending a Spiritualist meeting in Plymouth: “a vision appeared before her as if on film, showing an old schoolhouse in a valley and an avalanche of coal rushing down a mountainside.” She saw a small boy with a long fringe of hair surrounded by rescue workers, one of whom was wearing a peaked cap that she found odd. At around 4 a.m. on the morning of Friday, October 21, Sybil Brown in Brighton was terrified by a nightmare of a child screaming in a telephone booth, with another child walking towards her followed by a “black, billowing mass.” At about the same time, another woman in North London, Lorna Middleton, “awoke choking and gasping and with the sense of the walls caving in.” Far to the northwest of England, an elderly man dreamt of a series of brilliantly illuminated letters spelling out “A B E R F A N.” He had no idea what it meant. At 9.14 a.m., Monica McBean, then at work as a secretary at an aircraft factory, had a vision of a “black mountain moving and children buried under it.”<sup>141</sup>

By 9.14, Eryl Mai was already at Pantglas Junior School in Aberfan, Wales, for the last day before the mid-term holidays. At 9.15, far above the coal-mining village, a mass of water-saturated colliery spoil started sliding down tip 7 and it did not stop till 140,000 cubic yards (110,000 m<sup>3</sup>) of black slurry was moving down the mountain. People recalled hearing a sound like thunder or a low-flying jet as an avalanche like a “dark glistening wave” swept away two cottages in its path and engulfed the school and surrounding houses.<sup>142</sup> The result was heart-breaking: 116 children and 28 adults, 144 in all, had been killed. Watching events unfold on the television news on Sunday, Mrs. Milden saw a small boy with a long fringe of hair and nearby a worker wearing an odd-looking peaked cap.<sup>143</sup>

The psychiatrist Dr. John Barker took an interest in the disaster after he heard that a survivor had later died of fright. A member of the Society for Psychical Research, he was writing a book on what

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141 Greenhouse, *Premonitions*, p. 16. Middleton quoted in Sam Knight, “The Psychiatrist Who Believed People Could Tell the Future,” *The New Yorker* (February 25, 2019), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/04/the-psychiatrist-who-believed-people-could-tell-the-future>, accessed June 4, 2021.

142 Edmund Davies, *Report of the Tribunal Appointed to Inquire into the Disaster at Aberfan on October 21st, 1966* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967), pp. 26-7.

143 Greenhouse, *Premonitions*, p. 16.

he called “psychic death” – when people die from non-physical causes, such as fright. Arriving in Aberfan, he heard stories of the premonitions people had had. Contacting Peter Fairley, science editor of the London *Evening Standard*, he convinced him to publish an appeal for such premonitions. In the course of the next two weeks, he received 76 replies.

Another public appeal for premonitions made through *The Sun* and *Thompson’s Weekly* newspapers by the Oxford Institute for Psychophysical Research was launched three days after Barker’s appeal, garnering information from another 72 correspondents. The *News of the World* also investigated the question of premonitions. The three surveys brought in a total of 200 replies.<sup>144</sup>

Barker discarded sixteen of the replies and followed-up the others in more detail. In twenty-two cases the person claiming to have had a premonition told at least one other person, and sometimes as many as four, about it before the event, and in another two cases made a written record of their premonition beforehand. All of these replies came from people with no connection to the area and living some distance from Aberfan, mostly in and around London. Thirty-six took place as dreams, whilst the rest included waking visions and feelings of foreboding, mental distress and even physical sensations of choking or suffocation. The dream premonitions were distinctive by giving literal details of the disaster, of having a vivid quality and by representing the impending disaster as happening in the dreamer’s present.<sup>145</sup> Then it dawned on Dr. Barker:

While analyzing the letters, I realized that the time had surely come to call a halt to attempts to prove or disprove precognition. We should instead set about trying to harness and utilize it with a view to preventing future disasters.<sup>146</sup>

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144 Greenhouse, *Premonitions*, p. 17. Alan Murdie, “Dreams of Aberfan: A Forgotten Collection of Premonitions Received from the Public Concerning the Aberfan Disaster of October 1966,” paper presented to the 43rd International Annual Conference of the Society for Psychical Research, Leicester, 2019. Collection identified by Murdie as “File 35 Premonitions SPR Collection, University of Cambridge.”

145 Greenhouse, *Premonitions*, pp. 18-20. See also Barker, J.C. (1967). “Premonitions of the Aberfan Disaster,” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 44, 169-81; and GBR/0012/MS SPR/95/8/3, File 16/3 – Correspondence with J.C. Barker, 1965-1968, Society for Psychical Research Archive, Cambridge University Library.

146 J.C. Barker, *Medical News Tribune* (January 20, 1967), quoted in Greenhouse, *Premonitions*, p. 20.

## *BICS Prize Essay Competition: The Ghost in the Time Machine*

### *The Premonitions Bureau*

In December 1966, Barker contacted Fairley with a plan to establish a clearing house for predictions, the Premonitions Bureau, using the *Evening Standard* to solicit premonitions from the general public in order to prevent future tragedies like Aberfan. Fairley agreed, giving Barker twelve months. The Premonitions Bureau went live in January 1967, receiving 469 premonitions in its first year. Several were deadly accurate.

The first was from Alan Hencher. He telephoned the Bureau at 6 am on March 21, 1967, telling Barker about an aeroplane crash “over mountains,” with high fatalities: “There are one hundred and twenty-three people, possibly one hundred and twenty-four.” On April 20, a Globe Air Bristol Britannia aeroplane carrying 130 people crashed into a hillside south of Nicosia Airport in Cyprus. The *Evening Standard*’s frontpage headline was “124 Die in Airliner” – two more subsequently died in hospital. It was Cyprus’s worst aircrash.<sup>147</sup>

On April 23, 1967, Lorna Middleton contacted Barker: she had seen an astronaut looking “petrified, terrified and just frightened.” On April 24, Soviet cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov died when parachute failure caused his Soyuz capsule to smash into the ground at full speed. Hencher and Middleton again felt disaster loom towards the end of 1967, with Middleton describing a vision of a crowd and a railway platform, and seeing the words “Charing Cross,” a busy station in London, on November 1. On November 5, the Hastings to London Charing Cross train derailed near the Hither Green rail depot, killing 49 and injuring another 78. “Quite honestly it staggers me,” Barker told the *Evening News* afterwards, with the newspaper adding, dramatically, “Somehow, while dreaming or awake, they can gate-crash the time barrier.”<sup>148</sup>

In Spring, 1968, messages started coming in to the Bureau of another impending tragedy. Middleton wrote “There may be another assassination. It may be in America shortly,” whilst telling a journalist that “The word assassination continues. I cannot disconnect it from Robert Kennedy.” Joan Hope in Canada wrote “Robert Kennedy to follow in his brother's footsteps.” On June 4, Middleton wrote again to the Bureau: “Another assassination and again in America.” On June 5, Miss C.E. Piddock in Kent wrote in her diary “Janitor will die today” – she later realised that “Senator” must have been meant. In the US, Alan Vaughan wrote to Dr. Stanley Krippner at the Maimonides Medical Center, with the warning that “This dream may presage the assassination of a

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147 Knight, “Psychiatrist;” ICAO Circular 88-AN/74 Volume II, pp. 151-155, <https://aviation-safety.net/database/record.php?id=19670420-1>, accessed June 6, 2021. As far as I can tell from the available records, this was the first aviation accident after Hencher’s premonition.

148 Knight, “Psychiatrist;” “The Strange Case of the Two Who Knew,” *Evening News* (November 5, 1967).

third prominent American, one who had connections with John F. Kennedy [...] Could that other martyr be Bobby Kennedy?”<sup>149</sup> Robert F. Kennedy was mortally wounded in a hail of bullets at the Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, at around midnight on June 5, 1968, dying in hospital the next day.

The Premonitions Bureau was scoring remarkable hits – its success had inspired Robert Nelson to start a similar operation in the USA, the Central Premonitions Registry – but there were dark clouds on the horizon. At the same time as the Cyprus plane crash, Hencher started to receive premonitions that Barker’s life was in danger. Hencher’s warnings persisted into 1968. Now Middleton was having troubling premonitions about Barker. On February 7, she had a vision of him – just his head and shoulders – with her deceased parents: “my parents were trying to tell me something,” she said. Barker suffered a brain haemorrhage on August 18, 1968, dying later in hospital.<sup>150</sup>

#### *“The Future Does Exist”*

Before Barker, the SPR researchers Eleanor Sidgwick, Frederic Myers, H.F. Saltmarsh and Dame Edith Lyttelton, as well as winner of the Nobel Prize Charles Richet, the Director of the Institut Métapsychique International Eugene Osty, and the writer J.B. Priestley had all collected reports of premonitions and attempted to make some sense out of them.<sup>151</sup> Sidgwick, working with the fewest cases, remained the most sceptical, but, working with rather more cases, Myers concluded that “our conception of time loses its accustomed meaning.”<sup>152</sup> Lyttelton received many accounts of apparent precognition after a BBC radio broadcast in 1934, whilst she was President of the SPR, publishing the best cases in 1937. Although trying to reserve judgement, she conceded “that some predictions are cases of definite precognition I personally have no doubt at all,” and that from this “the world of the senses is then illusory.”<sup>153</sup> Struck by the veracity of evidence and credibility of the witnesses, Saltmarsh concluded that “we are bound to admit that the future does exist in some sense *now* – at

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149 Greenhouse, *Premonitions*, pp. 94, 98.

150 Knight, “Psychiatrist.”

151 Eleanor Sidgwick, “On the Evidence for Premonitions,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 5 (1889), pp. 288–354. Frederic Myers, ‘The Subliminal Self, Chapter IX: The Relation of Supernormal Phenomena to Time;—Precognition’, *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 11 (1895), 408–593; Charles Richet, *L’Avenir et la Prémonition* (Paris: Éditions Mouton, 1931); Eugene Osty, *Supernormal Faculties in Man: An Experimental Study* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1923); Edith Lyttelton, *Some Cases of Prediction* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1937); H.F. Saltmarsh, “Report on Cases of Apparent Precognition,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 42 (1934), pp. 49-103 and H.F. Saltmarsh, *Foreknowledge* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1938); J.B. Priestley, *Man and Time* (New York: Crescent Books, 1964).

152 Frederic Myers, “The Subliminal Self, Chapter VIII: The Relation of Supernormal Phenomena to Time;—Retrocognition,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 11 (1895), pp. 334–407 (p. 340).

the present moment,” and “we must revise our ordinary ideas about the nature of time.”<sup>154</sup> Already in 1931, Richet put it nicely when he said:

It would be inexcusably rash to affirm, as I have boldly done, that there are premonitions, if abundant and formal proof had not been advanced. This abundant and formal proof has, I think, been given.<sup>155</sup>

Eugene Osty worked for twelve years with a group of psychics, and was able to question them closely about their abilities, including the way time was represented to them. M. de Fleuriere saw time symbolically projected “on a semicircular screen,” with the past on the left, the present in the middle and the future on the right. Mme Morel seemed to stand in the stream of time, seeing the past behind her, the present at her side and the future ahead.<sup>156</sup> “Time, as well as Space,” he concluded, “is penetrable by the faculty of super-normal cognition, just as if Time were but an illusory creation of the human mind.”<sup>157</sup>

Saltmarsh also saw that the questions about time arising out of the study of precognition necessarily led to a re-examination of the possibility of life after death, although he did not go further than that. Additionally, he also came to the conclusion that the future is both predetermined and what he calls “plastic.”<sup>158</sup>

Experiments continued after the closure of the original Premonitions Bureau. The remote viewing pioneer Ingo Swann (1933–2013) ran the American Prophecy Project from November 1989 to December 1990.<sup>159</sup> The Estate of Ingo Swann relaunched this as the Prophecy Project in 2018. The website UKPsychics.com also ran an online “Premonitions Registry” from 1999 to 2005. Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove also ran a premonitions registry as a restricted access group on Yahoo from 2001, following the 9/11 Islamic terrorist attacks. There have been several attempts to recreate Barker’s

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153 Lyttelton, *Some Cases*, pp. 11, 158. Reading the book, one sees that Lyttelton gives equal or greater weight to coincidence and telepathy as explanations, and was reluctant to follow through the implications of precognition.

154 Saltmarsh, *Foreknowledge*, pp. 108, 116.

155 Richet, *Thirty Years of Psychological Research*, p. 396.

156 Osty, *Supernormal*, p. 224.

157 Osty, *Supernormal*, p. 31.

158 Saltmarsh, *Foreknowledge*, pp. 110, 114-5

159 Some of the results were published in Ingo Swann, *Your Nostradamus Factor: Your Innate Ability to See into the Future* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

original experiment, including a growing business in commercial precognition aimed at predicting market trends.<sup>160</sup>

After a year working on what she called “a classified project for the United States government” (i.e., Project Star Gate), the President of the American Statistical Association, and professor of statistics at the University of California, Davis, Jessica Utts, reported:

The data in support of precognition and possibly other related phenomena are quite strong statistically and would be widely accepted if it pertained to something more mundane. Yet, most scientists reject the possible reality of these abilities without ever looking at data!<sup>161</sup>

After studying 35 new cases, Ian Stevenson concluded that “true precognition may occur.”<sup>162</sup> A 1989 meta-analysis of 309 “future-telling” studies by 62 different investigators involving a total of 50,000 subjects between 1935 and 1987 concluded that there was a “highly significant precognition effect.”<sup>163</sup> Stevenson recognized that this “may require some of the more recondite explanations that upset our habitual notions of causation and time.” We can upset that even more when we consider precognition by disembodied consciousness.

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160 Steve Randolph, “A Brief History of Premonition Registries,” <https://psioneirology.com/index.php/articles/all-articles/item/6-premonition-registries>, accessed June 8, 2021; Amelia Tait, “Psychic Future: What Next for the ‘Precog Economy’?” *The Guardian* (Sept. 29, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2019/sep/29/psychic-future-what-next-for-the-precognition-economy>, accessed June 8, 2021.

161 Jessica Utts, “Appreciating Statistics,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 111.516 (2016), pp. 1373-1380 (p. 1379), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01621459.2016.1250592>.

162 Quoted in Mackenzie, *Riddle*, p. 23, from Stevenson, “Telepathic Impressions: A Review and Report of Thirty-Five New Cases,” *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychological Research*, 29 (1970).

163 Charles Honorton and Diane C. Ferrari, “Future-Telling: A Meta-Analysis of Forced-Choice Precognition Experiments, 1935-1987,” *Journal of Parapsychology*, 53 (December, 1989), pp. 281-308.

## Tomorrow's News

“My father’s plan, as explained by himself, was to visit the office of a paper selected for the test, and there note such names or statements as might lend themselves to his purpose.” The extraordinary thing was that the father in question was deceased and that the “names and statements” were from a newspaper that had not yet been printed. The Methodist minister Rev. Charles Drayton Thomas (1867–1953) started attending séances with Gladys Osborne Leonard from 1917 onwards and came to believe that he was in contact with his deceased father, John Drayton Thomas (d. 1903), and sister, Etta (d. 1920). Thomas’s evidence was reviewed by Eleanor Sidgwick, and Thomas, an active member of the SPR, applied the then standard experimental protocols of using book tests and proxy sittings. But it was his deceased father who came up with one of the most ingenious tests in the autumn of 1919.<sup>164</sup>

Thomas continued: “By employing a faculty which seems to involve some slight degree of prevision, he then ascertained the approximate position which these items would occupy when the paper was set up and printed.” By prior agreement, this would be the next day’s edition of *The Times* newspaper, and his father would communicate through Feda, Mrs. Leonard’s “spirit control.” Thomas would then post a copy of the communication to the SPR that evening, so that it would be received on the morning of the next day (the post was far more efficient in inter-war London than today).

As the newspaper had not been printed there was no possibility of fraud by the medium. In addition, the communications sometimes involved information not yet known to Thomas, ruling out the telepathy between Thomas and Mrs. Leonard. A good example was received at 11.54 a.m. on December 20, 1921: “In *The Times* to-morrow, about half-way down column one, see the name of a man very recently passed over, about whom you have been talking lately.” Feda added that the name James was somehow connected with this.<sup>165</sup>

According to Thomas, “I had not, to my knowledge, been speaking of any who were recently deceased, nor could I think of any recent death which had especially attracted my notice.” Puzzled, Thomas returned to London, where he went on to an appointment at what he called “the Mission.” It was here that he learnt of the death of someone whom he only knew of as Mr. Ray. A member of

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<sup>164</sup> First detailed in Charles Drayton Thomas, “Newspaper Tests,” *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 20 (1921-1922), pp. 89-107, and Charles Drayton Thomas, *Some New Evidence For Human Survival* (London: Spiritualist Press, 1922), and again in *Life Beyond Death With Evidence* (London: W. Collins, 1928), pp. 138ff; Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, “An Examination of Book-Tests Obtained in Sittings with Mrs. Leonard,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 31 (April, 1921), pp. 242-418.

<sup>165</sup> Thomas, *Life Beyond*, pp. 142-3.

this Mission, Thomas had recently visited Ray in hospital and later discussed his chances of recovery with a colleague who visited him regularly. He wondered if this might be the man.

Scanning the frontpage of *The Times* the next day, Thomas found the name Ray in an advertisement printed in the first column, about two inches under the halfway crease. It seemed like a hit, but he could not find any mention of the name James. It was only some days later that he discovered that Mr. Ray's first name had been James – he had not known that before (it was usual then to only refer to men by their surnames).

However, Thomas had one final test. The next morning, without telling the medium of the result, he asked Feda whether his father could give the surname or some more precise indication of it (names often being difficult) of the man in yesterday's experiment, specifically how many letters it had:

Feda then repeated my question and appeared to be watching intently while counting thus —“One—two—three—. One—two—three—there must be more than three. Nobody has only three letter in their name. One—two—three—One—two—three—.” All this was said very softly, as if not meant for me to hear. I then said, “Has he given you the number, Feda?” She replied, “He does not get beyond three. He keeps sticking at three. One, two, three.”<sup>166</sup>

This was only one of many similarly successful experiments. Out of 104 tests, Thomas counted 73 successes, 12 indefinite and 19 failures. Thomas was convinced: “The fact of this foreknowledge is certain. It has been demonstrated by too many examples to admit of question.”<sup>167</sup>

### **The Ghost Who Saw A Ghost**

Ghosts very often exhibit no conscious awareness of their state, like Martindale's Roman soldiers just marching on by. Does this mean that they have no consciousness, or only that they are unaware of being observed out of time?

Through my many contacts, I recently learnt of an unusual case. After giving a lecture on ghosts in 2019, Ken Smith was approached by a man with his own story. The house in which he and his wife lived, an Edwardian-period property in Manchester, was haunted. His wife had seen the ghost first, which he had dismissed, until he saw the ghost himself: a small young woman between about 17 and 20 years old, dressed in black. He would see her at the fireplace, as if laying coals in it, with her back turned to him, and he assumed that she must have been a servant. She appeared solid and

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<sup>166</sup> Thomas, *Life Beyond*, p. 144.

<sup>167</sup> Thomas, *Life Beyond*, pp. 106, 149; for the list of items, see pp. 149-151.

real, but would fade away after a few seconds. They both got used to seeing her, although they never saw her at the same time. Then one day he “surprised” her as he came into the room. She turned round and appeared to look him straight in the eyes. He registered her shock – white face and wide eyes – before she disappeared. He never saw her again.<sup>168</sup>

This is not the only such case. Rosina Clara Despard’s investigation of her ‘haunted house’ lasted several years and involved at least eighteen witnesses. On one occasion, Rosina tried to talk to the ghost. Entering the drawing-room on January 29, 1884:

She came in past me and walked to the sofa and stood still there, so I went up to her and asked her if I could help her. She moved, and I thought she was *going* to speak, but she only gave a slight gasp and moved towards the doors. Just by the door I spoke to her again, but she seemed as if she were quite unable to speak.

Rosina tried again to talk to the ghost, noting “she stopped and seemed as though about to speak,” and reported on several occasions that the ghost seemed to actively avoid her when she tried to touch it.<sup>169</sup>

In each case we have an apparition acting in a typically repetitive manner, acting as if still in their time, and unaware of the witness, but which then interacts. The reaction of surprise, if not actual fear, certainly suggests consciousness, otherwise how else could she have responded? If the ‘ghost’ existed in the past in relation to the observer, then the observer existed in the future in relation to the ‘ghost.’ Where in time are they when they see each other? What this can only mean is that the conscious connection between ‘ghost’ and ‘witness’ did not take place in ordinary time, or perhaps we should say within the constraints of our understanding of time.

If consciousness can survive death, going into the future, as it were, then it could not become fixed to a certain point in that individual’s past life. The maid must have grown older, we do not know by how much, but as we do not see her in the moment of death, we can safely assume that she lived beyond the actions described, so it makes no sense to think of her consciousness as fixed at this point. Logically, then, we must conclude that the past still exists, complete with our consciousness within these past moments. Evidence from the so-called “life review” during NDEs supports this. But somehow also the future already exists, with consciousness, or else the

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168 Pers. com., to be published as Ken Smith, “Two Northern Ghosts,” *Magazine of the Society for Psychical Research* (forthcoming). The events described relate to the period from c. 1989 to 1992.

169 Morton, “Record,” pp. 314, 315.

Edwardian maid and the modern witness, in her future, would not have been able to see each other, thus demonstrating conscious awareness.

### **The Near-Future Experience**

“I was shown all the details in my life, the one I’d already lived,” said Lisa, talking about her NDE, adding “and all that was to come if I returned to earth.”<sup>170</sup> Not only do people who have had NDEs experience life reviews, they also have life previews, showing them their future should they return to life. NDE researcher Kenneth Ring noticed this, too, calling it the “personal flashforward.” Ring also drew the logical conclusion that they “have extremely profound implications for our understanding of the nature of time.”<sup>171</sup>

There is also something special about this foreseen future. In 1972, Tracy T. had an NDE after going into a coma following the onset of Ryes Syndrome. During the experience he saw “the future of my life if I returned.” Like the past review this included, not just a vision of the events, but also their emotional content and meanings, even life purpose. The significant feature, however, was the plasticity of this future: “Not that anything was set in stone. Destined and yet was, and was not.”<sup>172</sup> Ring called this a “conditional future.”<sup>173</sup> It is probabilistic in nature: a Schrödinger’s Cat type of future.

An example of this is given in a remarkable case documented by Raymond Moody. An individual had an out-of-body experience in which they were taken to see the location where they would die – a bed in the recovery room of the hospital where the percipient was awaiting treatment. However, the percipient’s subsequent mental anguish on realizing that he would be unable to help his wife and adopted nephew led this entity to allow him to return from death against the expectations of the doctors, one of whom remarked “Miracles still happen.”<sup>174</sup>

### **Ghosts Out of Time**

“Something catches my attention,” recalled Dr. Bettina Peyton as she talked about her near-death experience. It is “twinkling light, like a tiny jewel,” containing her “entire experience, past, present and future, playing out simultaneously.”<sup>175</sup> Her conscious viewpoint – her consciousness – was external to her own time and able to see all of it. She has not been the only one.

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<sup>170</sup> Long, *Evidence*, p. 116.

<sup>171</sup> Kenneth Ring, *Heading Towards Omega* (New York: Morrow, 1984), p. 183.

<sup>172</sup> “1648 Tracy T NDE 3641,” [https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1tracy\\_t\\_nde.html](https://www.nderf.org/Experiences/1tracy_t_nde.html), accessed June 19, 2021.

<sup>173</sup> Kenneth Ring, *Heading Towards Omega* (New York: Morrow, 1984), p. 183.

<sup>174</sup> Moody, *Life After Life*, pp. 95-102.

## *BICS Prize Essay Competition: The Ghost in the Time Machine*

Fifty-five year-old anaesthetist at the University of Texas Health Center, Dr. Gerard Landry had had a conventional twenty-seven-year career in medicine when he died of a heart attack on March 24, 1979. Surprised to find himself still conscious, he described being in “a dimension beyond sequential time” where “past, present, and future are all merged.”<sup>176</sup>

There are so many more experiences that could be quoted in support of this. According to Bruce Greyson, 75% described the afterlife as outside of time, and, in an earlier study, 53% of OBEs mentioned “timelessness.”<sup>177</sup>

Many different terms have been used to describe the apparent ability to see into the future, such as clairvoyance, precognition, premonition, second sight, and life preview. Whilst the words differ, the essential elements remain the same. People can experience anything from physical and mental symptoms to actual visions, during dreams or wide awake, even whilst clinically dead, of things yet to come. If time is like an arrow, then the future has not yet come into existence, therefore nothing can be known about it. I might predict that tomorrow I will be sitting at my computer writing, because I was sitting at my computer yesterday and today, but this is obviously not the same thing. The content of premonitions is fundamentally different to what we would normally predict based on past actions, that is usually what makes them stand out in the first place. So we have to think again about the relationship between consciousness and the future, and the nature of the future, of time, itself.

Irene Kuhn’s body was clearly still on Michigan Boulevard – holding on to a lamppost and drawing attention to itself – but where was her consciousness and where was the future? For premonitions to be possible – and we know that they are because we have so many verified examples, not just Kuhn’s – then consciousness must be able to transcend our normal experience of space and time.

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175 Marjorie Woollacott and Bettina Peyton, “Verified Account of Near-Death Experience in a Physician Who Survived Cardiac Arrest,” *Explore*, 17.3 (May-June 2021), pp. 213-219 (p. 216).

176 Rita Bennett, *To Heaven and Back: True Stories of Those Who Have Made the Journey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997).

177 Greyson, *After*, p. 131. “Timelessness” described in 64% of NDEs, and 53% of OBEs, according to Greyson, “Near-Death Experience Scale” (1983).

## WITNESSES, CONSCIOUSNESS AND SPACETIME

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Having reviewed the evidence of countless witnesses and the research of serious investigators, do we, Scrooge-like, fold our arms and tell the ghosts (the immaterial identity formats (IFFs) behind all of the phenomena we have considered) that they are the result of indigestion? In observational research it is always going to be the problem that our powers of observation are imperfect. We know that, yet we must work with it.<sup>178</sup> As Albert Einstein observed, “All knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it.”<sup>179</sup>

However, it is not just a question of evidence, but also of theory. That the evidence appears to contradict mainstream physics is often the greatest reason for its rejection, sometimes without even considering the evidence at all.<sup>180</sup> But as physicist Henry Stapp contends, when considering the question of postmortem survival:

Rational science-based opinion on this question must be based on the content and quality of the empirical data, not on a presumed incompatibility of such phenomena with our contemporary understanding of the workings of nature.<sup>181</sup>

Stapp is right, of course, but if Scrooge does not even trust his own senses, then he is unlikely to trust the good sense of others. At root, his disbelief in Marley’s ghost is because ghosts should not exist, therefore some other explanation must be sought, such as indigestion. This means that we must also also look at what the evidence implies for the dominant models of consciousness in

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178 Early research by Richard Hodgson for the SPR found that participants at fake séances that he staged with the magician S.J. Davey were unable to correctly recall what had happened and believed that many of the things they had experienced were truly paranormal. Theodore Besterman in the 1930s and Richard Wiseman in the 1990s also found out how easy it was to fool people during séances. Having had the opportunity to personally investigate mediumship involving various physical phenomena such as sounds, lights, apports (materialized objects) and ectoplasm (a sort of psychic substance), I am aware of the unique conditions of the dark-room séance and have decided not to include such investigations in this paper: see Richard Hodgson, and S.J. Davey, “The Possibilities of Mal-observation and Lapse of Memory from a Practical Point of View,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 4 (1887), pp. 381-495; Theodore Besterman, “The Psychology of Testimony in Relation to Paraphysical Phenomena: Report of an Experiment,” *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 40 (1932), pp. 363-387; Richard Wiseman, Emma Greening, and Matthew Smith, “Belief in the Paranormal and Suggestion in the Seance Room,” *British Journal of Psychology*, 94.3 (2003), pp. 285-297; Leo Ruickbie, “The Séance,” *Paranormal Review*, 75 (Summer, 2015), pp. 12-15. Research on observational ability was carried out by Tony Cornell, a former President of the Society for Psychical Research, see his *Investigating the Paranormal* (New York: Helix Press, 2002).

179 Albert Einstein, “On the Method of Theoretical Physics,” *Philosophy of Science*, 1.1 (1934), pp. 163-169.

180 A point also made, for example, by Jan Pilotti in his critique of Arthur S. Reber and James E. Alcock, ‘Searching for the Impossible: Parapsychology’s Elusive Quest’, *American Psychologist*, 75.3 (Apr 2020), pp. 391–399, see Jan Pilotti, “Does the Future Already Exist?” *Magazine of the Society for Psychical Research* (forthcoming).

181 Henry P. Stapp, “Compatibility of Contemporary Physical Theory with Personality Survival” (unpublished, c.2009), <https://www-atlas.lbl.gov/~stapp/Compatibility.pdf>, accessed August 14, 2021.

mind–brain dependency and reality in physical materialism, the theory that everything has a causal dependence on, or can be reduced to, physical processes – a mechanical universe in which our sense of ‘I’ is just an incidental puff of smoke.<sup>182</sup>

### **Scrooge in the Machine: The Problem of Witnesses**

Scrooge has haunted every step of our inquiry with his dismissal of the evidence of the senses, but what sort of evidence could refute Scrooge’s indigestion theory of apparitions? As established at the beginning, our aim, if there is evidence, is that it should constitute proof beyond reasonable doubt. As in the legal system, this means that we will principally rely on witness testimony. The question, then, what sort of witness testimony is believable? There are three aspects to this.

#### *Credible Witnesses and Reliable Testimony*

Credibility means is this someone who is competent and whom we can believe based on their reputation, that is, their past actions and present demeanour? Social standing is an obvious starting point and we have heard testimony from witnesses who are certainly credible on that account: Harry Martindale would become a policeman; Rosina Despard was trusted by Frederic Myers; Irene Kuhn was a respected journalist; Albert Heim became a renowned geologist; the family of Captain Bowyer-Bower were eminently respectable; even Scrooge was credible. Their testimony was reliable, even if incredible, because it was internally consistent and, where known, consistent over time: what they said made sense and continued to make sense. For all of the principal eyewitnesses we have called to present testimony, none of them had been convicted of any crime and there was no evidence of prior mental or psychological impairment, and no evidence of recreational drug use at the time of the incident. Another key determinant is lack of bias: witnesses, such as those just mentioned, had no prior agenda. Yes, we have credible witnesses and reliable testimony.<sup>183</sup>

Because of the Scrooge Paradox, credibility and reliability are not really the issue. Scrooge would undoubtedly have thought himself credible and reliable, but still did not believe himself. If Her Majesty The Queen came on the television news to say that she had had an after-death communication from her deceased husband Prince Philip, we would likely still not believe her.<sup>184</sup> In

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182 Known as epiphenomenalism, a theory stemming from Cartesian Dualism and pioneered by T. H. Huxley, “On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History,” *The Fortnightly Review*, 16 (1874), pp. 555–580.

183 Henry C. Black, *A Law Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Union, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 1995), pp. 232-3; “Credible Witness,” and “Credibility,” in John Bouvier (ed.), *A Law Dictionary, Adapted to the Constitution and Laws of the United States* (Philadelphia: Childs & Peterson, 1856); “Credibility,” in William J. Stewart, *Collins Dictionary of Law* (Glasgow: Collins, 2006); “Credibility,” in Jeffrey Lehman and Shirelle Phelps, (eds), *West’s Encyclopedia of American Law*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: The Gale Group, 2008). Credibility and reliability are often used interchangeably.

fact, The Queen does claim to have seen a ghost, that of Elizabeth I at Windsor Castle, and her late sister Princess Margaret said she saw it, too.<sup>185</sup> Do we believe them?

The problem with witnesses is tied to the question of perception: when we ‘see’ something, what is actually taking place? The philosophy of perception offers two principal models.<sup>186</sup> The first, direct or naive realism argues that vision (and the senses generally) provide direct awareness of things as they really are: “what you see is what you get.” That is basically our everyday, common sense view. However, we know that people can see things that are not there (hallucinations). From this, indirect or representational realism argues that vision is an inner, mental representation of what is “out there:” “what you see is what you think you see.” Psychologist David Ludden calls this “virtual reality in your head.”<sup>187</sup>

Memory is also a virtual simulation of what has happened to us in our lives. As a dynamic reconstruction, memory is vulnerable to modification.<sup>188</sup> Research has shown that people can be ‘primed’ to remember things differently or even to ‘remember’ things that did not happen.<sup>189</sup> What

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184 Queen Victoria allegedly held séances with Prince Albert and later to contact him after his death in 1861, see Raymond Buckland, *The Spirit Book: The Encyclopedia of Clairvoyance, Channeling, and Spirit Communication* (Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 2005), p. 340.

185 Widely reported in the press, for example, Becky Pemberton, “That’s the Spirit: The Queen is Sharing Windsor Castle with 25 Ghosts During Lockdown – Including One She’s Claimed to Have Seen,” *The Sun* (May 20, 2020), <https://www.thesun.co.uk/fabulous/11669633/the-queen-windsor-castle-ghosts-lockdown/>, accessed July 19, 2021. They are not the only royals to have seen a ghost: as a 16-year-old midshipman, the future King George V reported seeing the famous ghost ship, *The Flying Dutchman*, see Ruickbie, *Ghost Hunting*, unpaginated digital edition.

186 It is, of course, a vastly complex field, see Tim Crane and Craig French, “The Problem of Perception,” and Jack Lyons, “Epistemological Problems of Perception,” in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, 2021).

187 David Ludden, “What Do You See When You Look at the World?” *Psychology Today* (February 28, 2016), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/talking-apes/201602/what-do-you-see-when-you-look-the-world>, accessed May 3, 2021.

188 Maclen Stanley, “‘I Saw It With My Own Eyes.’ But did You Really?” *Psychology Today* (April 28, 2021), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/making-sense-chaos/202104/i-saw-it-my-own-eyes-did-you-really>, accessed May 3, 2021. See also M.M. Kibbe, “Varieties of Visual Working Memory Representation in Infancy and Beyond,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24 (2015), pp. 433-439.

189 Foundational work on this subject was conducted by Bartlett, see Frederic Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932); with later important studies by E.F. Loftus, D.G. Miller and H.J. Burns, “Semantic Integration of Verbal Information into Visual Memory,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Learning and Memory*, 4 (1978), pp. 19-31; and E.F. Loftus and J.E. Pickrell, “The Formation of False Memories,” *Psychiatr. Ann.*, 25 (1995), pp. 720-725. See also Kimberley Wade’s experiments in creating fake memories in S. Milgram and R.L. Shortland, *Television and Antisocial Behavior: Field Experiments* (New York: Academic Press, 1973). With regard to supposed paranormal phenomena, psychological experiments have shown that suggestion, expectation and ‘agency’ (thinking things are done on purpose by ‘something’) can induce normal individuals to experience the paranormal, for a summary see Leo Ruickbie, *A Brief Guide to Ghost Hunting* (London: Robinson, 2013).

this means is that even if a witness and/or his testimony is ‘reliable’ in legal terms, memory itself is still suspect.<sup>190</sup> Does this mean that Scrooge was right?

As evolutionary solutions to navigating our virtual reality and telling friends from foes, perception and memory are good at what they are meant for. In the legal field, research has shown that, under the right conditions, eyewitnesses can correctly recall things more than 90% of the time.<sup>191</sup> In criminal trials, eyewitness testimony is still one of the most convincing forms of evidence.<sup>192</sup> As long as we are aware of the dynamics involved, judges and juries can continue to rely on witnesses. But what about Scrooge?

### *Corroboration from Other Witnesses*

The Scrooge Paradox – “seeing is not believing” – is why we have to use more than one witness, and more than one case. And we have witnesses and cases aplenty. For “Ghosts of the Past:” Martindale’s Roman soldiers were attested to by several other witnesses unknown to him and at different times; Despard’s investigation documented at least eighteen witnesses to the Cheltenham Ghost, including four collective sightings; and the SPR’s “Census” revealed ninety-five cases of collective visual hallucinations (apparitions). For “Ghosts of the Present:” the single case of Capt. Bowyer-Bower involved five different percipients; there were eighty first-hand accounts of apparitions seen within twelve hours of death in the SPR’s “Census,” and Vincent’s ADC research discovered fifty-seven cases involving multiple witnesses of crisis apparitions. For “Ghosts of the Future:” I detailed just nine of sixty premonitions of the Aberfan disaster investigated by Barker,<sup>193</sup> which itself was only a small subset of the 200 premonition accounts received by three different newspaper appeals. And these are from only the few cases presented here, there are many more such corroborative examples.

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190 Justice Leggatt made several key rulings and recommendations on witness credibility, especially the role of memory, in *Gestmin SGPS v Credit Suisse (UK) Ltd* [2013] EWHC 3560, <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Comm/2013/3560.html>, with an example of its further consideration and application in *AB v Pro-Nation Limited* [2016] EWHC 1022 (QB).

191 Psychologist John Wixted led an international team to investigate the problem of eyewitness testimony: the 90% finding reported in J.T. Wixted, L. Mickes, S.E. Clark, S.D. Gronlund and H.L. Roediger III, “Initial Eyewitness Confidence Reliably Predicts Eyewitness Identification Accuracy,” *American Psychologist*, 70.6 (2015), pp. 515-526; they also found that “Eyewitness confidence was strongly related to accuracy,” see John T. Wixted, Laura Mickes, John C. Dunn, Steven E. Clark, and William Wells, “Estimating the Reliability of Eyewitness Identifications from Police Lineups,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 113.2 (January 12, 2016), pp. 304-309.

192 T. R. Benton, D. F. Ross, E. Bradshaw, W. N. Thomas, and G.S. Bradshaw, “Eyewitness Memory is Still Not Common Sense: Comparing Jurors, Judges and Law Enforcement to Eyewitness Experts,” *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 20 (2006), pp. 115–129.

193 He had discarded 16 of the 76 replies received after his appeal in the *Evening Standard*.

Scrooge might argue that this is only evidence of collective indigestion, which is why the legal system is not the best method for testing scientific claims. Case histories are frequently used to cite or establish precedents (so-called case or common law) because the aim is to make the law a consistent system, but single cases are flawed because they are not representative.<sup>194</sup> We have all heard the argument that so-and-so smoked like a chimney and lived to be a hundred. That is always possible, but a recent survey of almost 40,000 people showed that smokers' life expectancy is on average thirteen years less than that of non-smokers.<sup>195</sup> Even the best single case demonstrating the survival of consciousness after death may only be some wild exception, but when there are a hundred such cases, or a thousand, then the evidential balance shifts in favour of the fact.

For example, since Heim's foray into the subject in the nineteenth century, NDEs have now been extensively studied. Forty-two studies involving more than 2,500 NDE cases were published from 1975 to 2005, and, despite differences in methodology, were consistent in their descriptions of the content of NDEs.<sup>196</sup> Extensive research over time is now able to present similar findings on ADCs, OBEs, deathbed visions, reincarnation (Stevenson amassed 3,000 cases alone), etc., showing patterns in large numbers of cases.

Using large numbers of cases also means that flawed witness testimony (lying, fraud and deception) is averaged out in the same way as the wildly exceptional, and what we are left with are probabilities. The balance of probabilities is usually the lower form of evidence required in civil cases, but where probability is high then it must also push into the "beyond reasonable doubt" category, since doubt is only a question concerning the probability of something.

#### *Confirmation from Independent Sources*

This is the golden test: can a case demonstrate that the experiencer received information that would otherwise have been impossible to know or guess? A nice example was Miss G.'s correct identification of the dark jacket 'worn' by the apparition of Joseph Kirk, or Charles Tart's Miss Z. identifying a random number while having an OBE. More dramatic cases include Pam Reynolds's correct description of her surgery whilst clinically dead, and the information received by Al Sullivan concerning the illness and recovery of his neighbour's son. Vincent's ADC research

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194 Stuart Sutherland, *Irrationality* (London: Pinter & Martin, 2007 [1992]), pp. 154-5.

195 Study conducted by Statistics Netherlands and the Netherlands Institute of Mental Health and Addiction using a sample size of almost 40,000 people aged 20-80 from 2001 to 2006, see "Heavy Smokers Cut Their Lifespan by 13 Years on Average," CBS (2017), <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2017/37/heavy-smokers-cut-their-lifespan-by-13-years-on-average>, accessed July 15, 2021.

196 Van Lommel, *Consciousness Beyond Life*, p. 107.

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uncovered 180 cases where an apparition of the deceased was seen before the witness knew that that person had died, and another 99 cases in which information was conveyed that was subsequently confirmed. Irene Kuhn's detailed premonition of her husband's funeral was confirmed by the event itself. After Aberfan, Barker's Premonitions Bureau received warnings of the 1967 Cyprus air crash, the Soyuz capsule crash, the Hither Green rail disaster, the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, and the sudden death of Barker himself, all confirmed by the events taking place. Again, I have not included all of the cases covered.

To sum up, we have had credible witnesses present reliable testimony. In many cases this has been corroborated by other witnesses, who have either experienced the phenomenon at other times or at the same time. In addition, we have strong supporting evidence from incidents in which information was relayed that could not, under the circumstances, have been known to the percipient. Beyond that we have statistical analyses and meta-analyses that show patterns in human experience that are indicative of a real effect. Not only is this convincing evidence, but it rules out the alternative explanations, such as deliberate fraud, misperception, psychopathological hallucination, telepathy between the living, and environmental recording as being able to account for *all* of the cases.

Even Scrooge was finally convinced by the evidence of his eyes – made easier by a religious context that required ghosts and an afterlife to put them in. According to some, materialistic science has no room for such immaterial and autonomous intelligences, forcing Scrooge to re-consider the matter of indigestion yet again; but according to others, science has already moved beyond materialism.

## The Ghost in the Machine: The Problem of Consciousness

For mainstream science, the living body is like a haunted house. We can scan the brain and find out which parts are used when this or that happens,<sup>197</sup> like flipping light switches on and off in 30 East Drive, but we have still not met the owner of the house – consciousness remains elusive. And when we die, the doctors can only observe that the lights are no longer working.

### *Mind Without a Brain*

To be meaningful the survival of consciousness must mean the survival, not just of “awareness,” but of the thing that is “aware.” Since early attempts with ill-fated phrenology, medicine has been trying to pinpoint our psychological functioning in specific areas of that grey mass between our ears, what the philosopher and cognitive scientist David Chalmers called the “easy problem” of consciousness.<sup>198</sup> Whilst successful to an extent, we have still not found where “I” comes from, what Chalmers called the “hard problem” of consciousness. Philosophy professor Alva Noë argued that “Consciousness does not happen in the brain. That’s why we have been unable to come up with a good explanation of its neural basis.”<sup>199</sup>

The defeat of Cartesian Dualism (Descartes’s idea of the “ghost in the machine”) at the hands of Enlightenment materialism (all machine) has left no philosophical room for a mind that is not the product of the physical.<sup>200</sup> But just as Descartes prepared the way for materialism by excluding recourse to unprovable spiritual explanations, so materialism finds itself challenged by evidence that has only become possible due to both the scientific method and advances in science (especially medicine).

People are seen outside their own living bodies. People are seen when they no longer have bodies. People report conscious experience when clinically dead with no measurable physiological activity. That experience is usually reported as more vivid and meaningful than ordinary consciousness, so it is not some residual as-yet-undetected brain activity, the end-effects of the dying brain or due to anaesthetic drugs, all of which, where known, produce a diminished

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197 Christof Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness* (Englewood, CO: Roberts & Co., 2004), pp. 16–19.

198 David Chalmers, “Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2.3 (1995), pp. 200–219.

199 Alva Noë, *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009), unpaginated digital edition. He is not alone in this assessment, see also Antti Revonsuo, *Foundations of Consciousness* (New York: Routledge, 2018), p. x: “The fundamental nature of mind – the ‘stuff’ that our conscious mental life is made of – remains a mystery for science.”

200 René Descartes, *Meditations*, II.8 (Paris: Michael Soly, 1641); and for materialism, see Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *L’Homme Machine* [“The Man Machine”] (Leiden: 1747).

consciousness, and certainly cannot be explained as a reconstruction of birth memories (Carl Sagan's contribution to the debate).<sup>201</sup>

During these altered states (apparitions, OBEs, NDEs, premonitions, etc.), the witness is not seeing and hearing in the ordinary sense. In extreme conditions (NDEs), this perception must act independently of the physical sense organs because they are unavailable, effectively shut down in a dead body, and is also sometimes described in ways that are impossible for the visual system even when operational, such as 360-degree vision.<sup>202</sup> If this perception functions independently of the senses, then it cannot use the information normally processed by the senses, that is, light and sound. Consciousness can only 'use' consciousness under these conditions.

Other researchers have also noticed this. Kenneth Ring and Sharon Cooper interviewed thirty-one people who were severely visually impaired or blind, including blind from birth, who had experienced consciousness beyond the body during an OBE or NDE. Most of them also claimed to have been able to see during these experiences, and in some cases their observations were verified by others. Ring and Cooper termed this ability "mindsight."<sup>203</sup> The same ability must be involved in all cases of extra-sensory perception, or whatever we might call it, from Victorian gentlemen projecting themselves into ladies' bedrooms to government agents remote viewing secret Russian facilities (Star Gate).

There is still a default tendency, often implicit, to think of extra-sensory perception (ESP), or psi more generally, as some 'sixth sense,' as it was formerly thought of, when the evidence points to it not being a 'sense' at all, but a feature of consciousness, that is, of 'being' itself. Terms such as mindsight perpetuate this and are demonstrably theoretically limited, since 'mindsight' involves mind-hearing and mind-feeling (emotions), just as much as mind-seeing. The psychological primacy of sight in normal individuals has led to a psychological primacy of sight in abnormal conditions. What the evidence shows is, not that we have some hidden super power, but that consciousness is super-extended in a way that is normally hidden from us. Thus, all these scattered bits of information labelled clairvoyance or premonitions, apparitions or OBEs, are parts of a jigsaw

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201 Several arguments against NDE are put forward by Susan Blackmore, *Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences* (New York: Prometheus, 1993). For a summary and refutation of Carl Sagan's birth model of NDEs, see Carl B. Becker, "The Failure of Saganomics: Why Birth Models Cannot Explain Near-Death Phenomena," *Anabiosis: The Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 2 (1982), pp. 102-9.

202 Some examples are given in Long and Perry, *Evidence*, p. 90.

203 Kenneth Ring and Sharon Cooper, "Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences in the Blind: A Study of Apparent Eyeless Vision," *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 16 (1998), pp. 101-47; Kenneth Ring and Sharon Cooper, *Mindsight: Near-Death and Out-of-Body Experiences in the Blind* (Palo Alto, CA: William James Center for Consciousness Studies/Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, 1999).

that, when put together, provide a fuller picture of this consciousness. And what this picture shows is a level of consciousness (or, the real extent of consciousness) that operates outside of physical space and time, including the physical structure of the brain. The evidence is there, as uncomfortable as that might be for some people, including myself, to concede. Nor should we immediately think that this is impossible. Developments in science provide several models that could account for and accommodate this outrageous notion.

### *Consciousness in the Cloud*

The lack of direct evidence for consciousness as a product of the brain, leaves open the question of whether the brain creates or, in some sense, receives consciousness. As early as 1891, the Oxford philosopher F.C.S Schiller proposed that “matter is not what produces consciousness but what limits it and confines its intensity within certain limits.”<sup>204</sup> The French philosopher Henri Bergson took a similar position when he theorized that mind was not reducible to matter, and vice versa. Like Schiller, for Bergson the brain channels the mind in biologically pragmatic directions, principally survival, but he was also finding his way towards a holographic theory before holography was known, by stating that “the part is the whole.”<sup>205</sup> Bergson was influenced in his thinking by the reported experiences of life preview occurring on the brink of death.<sup>206</sup> William James also suggested that as well as thinking of the brain as having a productive function, we should also consider that it may be a “permissive or transmissive function.”<sup>207</sup>

Although, as James noted, the production model was “a little more popular,”<sup>208</sup> the idea of transmission continued to be researched and explored. The influential British psychologist Sir Cyril Burt argued:

A comparison of the specific micro-neural situations in which consciousness does and does not arise suggests that the brain functions, not as a generator of consciousness, but rather as

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204 *Riddles of the Sphinx: A Study in the Philosophy of Evolution* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), published under the pseudonym of “Troglodyte” (‘cave dweller’ in reference to Plato’s cave).

205 Discovered by Dennis Gabor in 1947, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1971, see Dennis Gabor, “Microscopy by Reconstructed Waveforms,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society* (1949), pp. 454-487.

206 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1889); Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (New York: Macmillan, 1912 [1896]); see also his “Brain and Thought: A Philosophical Illusion,” in Henri Bergson, *Mind Energy: Lectures and Essays*, trans. H. Wildon Carr (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1920), pp. 231-255. The holographic implications of Bergson’s work has also been recognised by Stephen E. Robbins, “Bergson and the Holographic Theory of Mind,” *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 5 (2006), pp. 365-394.

207 William James, “Human Immortality,” Ingersoll Lecture, 1898.

208 William James, “Human Immortality.”

a two-way transmitter and detector; i.e., although its activity is apparently a necessary condition, it cannot be a sufficient condition, of conscious experience.<sup>209</sup>

Aldous Huxley found these theories useful for making sense of his experiences with psychedelics, comparing the brain to a “reducing valve” for “mind at large.” Further research in the field has strengthened the observation that psychedelics seem to have the ability to turn off the brain’s filtering of consciousness, giving access to mystical states and/or higher dimensions (which may or may not be the same thing).<sup>210</sup> But there is still a demarcation between drug states and other altered states, for example, Greyson cites a case of LSD overdose and an attempted suicide using opioids where the drug-induced hallucinations demonstrably affect the physical brain but not the mind during an NDE.<sup>211</sup>

Any theory that might support survival does not have to account for those things that appear not to support survival. For example, a woman changes behaviour due to Alzheimer’s and where once calm and pleasant becomes violent and disorderly, thus if the mind is independent of the brain, then this would not happen goes the argument.<sup>212</sup> However, even if the mind is independent of the brain, we still know that for *physical* existence the brain is very necessary, or else we would not have it. A malfunctioning brain due to disease does not rule out the independence of the mind, but simply shows that the reception of consciousness can become impaired to the point where we seem to be dealing with a different person. We have no insight into what is going on with regards to that original, pre-disease consciousness, therefore the condition tells us little, although we often assume much from it. Such theoretical objections based on dissimilar cases do not undermine the empirical evidence we have for the continuation of consciousness beyond the body (alive and dead). It would be like arguing that because oranges and apples are both fruits, and oranges are orange, that apples cannot be red or green.

Modern neuroscience often uses information technology analogies to explain the working of the mind–brain.<sup>213</sup> We can do that, too, but we will need something different from what I call the ‘fleshbot’ model. If the brain is the receiver of mind, then mind can be thought of as ‘in the cloud,’

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209 Cyril Burt, “Brain and Consciousness,” *British Journal of Psychology*, 59.1 (February, 1968), pp. 55-69.

210 Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954); for evidence of perceptual activation in blind subjects during hallucinogen use, see A.E. Krill, H.J. Alpert, A.M. Ostfeld, “Effects of a Hallucinogenic Agent in Totally Blind Subjects,” *Arch. Ophthalmol.*, 69 (1963), pp. 180-185, and R.K. Siegel, J. Brewster, C.A. Johnson, M. Jarvik, “The Effects of Hallucinogens on Blind Monkeys,” *International Pharmacopsychiatry* (1976); Ring and Cooper, *Mindsight*, 2008; for recent research in psychedelics see David Luke, *Otherworlds: Psychedelics and Exceptional Human Experience*, 2nd ed. (London: Aeon Books, 2019). Greyson, *After*, p. 129, also refers to research showing that psychedelic drug states show *decreased* brain activity.

211 Justin, LSD overdose, and Stephen, suicide with opioids, in Greyson, *After*, pp. 82-4, 84-6.

212 Paul Edwards made exactly this counter-argument in his entry on “Reincarnation,” in Stein, *Encyclopedia*, p. 641.

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and consciousness is like cloud computing, allowing us to see a possible model for consciousness to be non-local and in two places at once (the here-and-now and the here-after). After the permanent failure of the receiving instrument, consciousness simply continues in the cloud. We could call this ‘cloud consciousness,’ but we could also call it the consciousness dimension – we are just grasping for the best metaphor to represent this possibility to ourselves. The problem is where is the cloud and how does it work?

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213 Alan Turing seems to have started the trend in “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind*, 59 (1950), pp. 433-460.

## The Ghost of the Machine: The Problem of Reality

Taking one example, Kuhn's consciousness could 'see' and 'hear' in a three-dimensional, full-colour, realistic world, with time progression, in her future, even though her sense organs – her eye and ears – were still in the body holding onto the lamppost in her present. Only a consciousness that is not the product of the brain could seemingly act independently of it, but then we must also concede that consciousness is no longer in space and time as we commonly experience them.

As the accusation stands against some of our colleagues, have we also violated “the basic laws of physics as they are currently understood?”<sup>214</sup> Are Newton and Einstein turning in their graves? The orbit and rotation of Mercury violated Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation, but did we deny the existence of Mercury because of that? Luckily not, because Einstein's Theory of General Relativity was able to account for the observed deviation.<sup>215</sup> Just as Einstein at first rejected later interpretations of Quantum Mechanics, with its “spooky action at a distance” and dice-playing deities, so he finally had to accept them.<sup>216</sup> As Einstein found out, even the ‘laws of physics’ violate the laws of physics. There is always an ongoing tension between some observables and the framework established by so-called laws, which are really just mathematical statements about physical relationships. So have we violated any laws and what would that mean?

Science had once reached a point when everything seemed certain and only a small amount of tidying up remained. In 1878, the German physicist Philipp von Jolly advised one of his students not to go into physics because “in this field, almost everything is already discovered, and all that remains is to fill a few unimportant holes.”<sup>217</sup>

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214 In addition to Tressoldi, see the critique of Etzel Cardeña, “The Experimental Evidence for Parapsychological Phenomena: A Review,” *American Psychologist*, 73.5 (July/August, 2018), pp. 663–677, by Arthur S. Reber, James E. Alcock, “Why Parapsychological Claims Cannot Be True,” *Skeptical Inquirer*, 43.4 (July/August, 2019), and again in Arthur S. Reber and James E. Alcock, “Searching for the Impossible: Parapsychology's Elusive Quest,” *American Psychologist*, 75.3 (April, 2020), pp. 391–399.

215 The perihelion precession of Mercury's orbit is one of the three classical tests of general relativity proposed by Einstein in Albert Einstein, “Die Grundlage der allgemeinen Relativitätstheorie [“The Foundation of the General Theory of Relativity”],” *Annalen der Physik*, 354.7 (1916), pp. 769–822.

216 Demonstrated by Maria Fuwa, Shuntaro Takeda, Marcin Zwierz, Howard M. Wiseman, and Akira Furusawa, “Experimental Proof of Nonlocal Wavefunction Collapse for a Single Particle using Homodyne Measurements,” *Nature Communications*, 6 (2015). A team of physicists from the University of Glasgow captured the first image of a Bell entanglement in 2019, see “First Image of Einstein's ‘Spooky’ Particle Entanglement,” BBC (July 13, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-48971538>.

217 Quoted in Alan P. Lightman, *The Discoveries: Great Breakthroughs in Twentieth-Century Science, Including the Original Papers* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 8. The American physicist Albert A. Michelson said much the same thing in 18994, see John Horgan, *The End of Science* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), p. 19. Not Lord Kelvin as usually stated, see Lord Kelvin, “Nineteenth-Century Clouds Over the Dynamical Theory of Heat and Light,” paper presented at the Royal Institute, London, April 27, 1900, published in *The Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*, 6.2 (July, 1901); incorrectly cited, for example, in Ciarán Gilligan-Lee, “We Have Hints of a

That student was Max Planck, who along with Albert Einstein, revolutionized physics in the early twentieth century: Planck with his solution to black-body radiation in 1900, which introduced the concept of “quanta,” and, drawing upon that, Einstein’s solution to the photoelectric effect in 1905 (before his Theory of Special Relativity, and later General Theory of Relativity), and we were plunged down the rabbit hole of Quantum Mechanics.<sup>218</sup>

“Physical objects are not in space,” said Einstein, “but these objects are spatially extended (as fields). In this way the concept ‘empty space’ loses its meaning [...] the field thus becomes an irreducible element of physical description, irreducible in the same sense as the concept of matter (particles) in the theory of Newton.”<sup>219</sup> But ‘the field’ changes our understanding of ‘matter.’

Giving a lecture in Florence, Planck told his audience “having studied the atom, I am telling you that there is no matter as such. All matter arises and persists only due to a force that causes the atomic particles to vibrate, holding them together in the tiniest of solar systems, the atom.”<sup>220</sup> We have since revised this model: it is only the measurement of the electron’s position that creates a point-like particle, meaning that unmeasured electrons should be thought of more like waves (or fields), creating an electron ‘cloud’ around the atomic nucleus in which there is a *probability* of finding an electron.

The materiality of things – this page, the eyes reading it and so on – are mostly empty spaces defined by probabilities surrounding infinitesimal balls of quarks in gluon fields.<sup>221</sup> That is certainly not how we experience reality in the everyday world. And the immateriality of ghosts and consciousness suddenly seems less problematic.

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Theory Beyond Quantum Physics,” *New Scientist* (June 13, 2018), <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23831820-300-we-have-hints-of-a-theory-beyond-quantum-physics/>, accessed July 30, 2021.

218 J. Mehra, and H. Rechenberg, *The Historical Development of Quantum Theory*, vol. 1: “The Quantum Theory of Planck, Einstein, Bohr and Sommerfeld” (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982). This early work became known as the “old quantum mechanics,” as other researchers, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, Max Born and Erwin Schrödinger, pushed its implications further in the mid to late 1920s, coming to be known as the Copenhagen Interpretation. The term ‘quantum mechanics’ was first used in 1924 by Max Born, “Über Quantenmechanik,” *Z. Phys.*, 26 (1924), pp. 379-395.

219 Albert Einstein, *The Metaphysics of Relativity* (1950).

220 Quoted in Wolfgang Pauli, “Der Einfluss archetypischer Vorstellungen auf die Bildung naturwissenschaftlicher Theorien bei Kepler in C.G. Jung and W. Pauli, *Naturerklärung und Psyche* (Zurich: Rascher Verlag, 1952), p. 163; translated into English as “The Influence of Archetypal Ideas on the Scientific Theories of Kepler,” in C.G. Jung, and W. Pauli, *The Interpretation of Nature and Psyche*, Bollingen Series LI (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955).

221 Quarks were discovered simultaneously by Gell-Mann and Zweig, see Murray Gell-Mann, “A Schematic Model of Baryons and Mesons,” *Physics Letters*, 8.3 (1964), pp. 214–215, and George Zweig, “An SU(3) Model for Strong Interaction Symmetry and its Breaking” (Unpublished, 1964).

*Special Theory of Immateriality*

The observations presented here allow two hypotheses: 1) that consciousness can exist independently of the physical body; and 2) that consciousness can seemingly operate in a state outside our everyday experience of space and time. The first does not violate any ‘laws’ because we have no laws of consciousness, although it does contradict our *expectation* that consciousness is dependent on the brain, but is explicable if we use the alternative “reducing valve” model. The second does not contradict any laws because physics has shown that our everyday experience of space and time is not an accurate one. Physics now operates on at least a four-dimensional understanding of spacetime (Einstein–Minkowski) that can be expanded to five dimensions (Kaluza–Klein),<sup>222</sup> six dimensions (real spacetime symmetry),<sup>223</sup> ten dimensions (Superstring Theory),<sup>224</sup> eleven dimensions (M-Theory),<sup>225</sup> or even twenty-six dimensions (Bosonic String Theory),<sup>226</sup> in a universe that may better be described as a four-dimensional ‘brane’ in a higher-dimensional ‘bulk’ (brane cosmology),<sup>227</sup> a multiverse<sup>228</sup> or the potentially infinite parallel universes of the “Many Worlds Interpretation”<sup>229</sup>, or even the “Many Interacting Worlds Theory.”<sup>230</sup>

As cosmologist Prof. Bernard Carr has pointed out, there is plenty of “space for psi” in current physics;<sup>231</sup> however, here we are looking for a model of spacetime that could accommodate the view

222 First proposed by Theodor Kaluza in 1919, published as Theodor Kaluza, “Zum Unitätsproblem in der Physik,” *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: 1921), pp. 966–972, with subsequent quantum interpretation by Oskar Klein to become the Kaluza–Klein theory.

223 E.A.B. Cole, “Superluminal Transformations using either Complex Space-Time or Real Space-Time Symmetry,” *Il Nuovo Cimento A*, 40 (1977), pp. 171–180

224 D=10 first calculated by John H. Schwarz, “Physical States and Pomeron Poles in the Dual Pion Model,” *Nuclear Physics B*, 46.1 (1972), pp. 61–74.

225 Proposed by Edward Witten, “String Theory Dynamics in Various Dimensions,” *Nuclear Physics B*, 443.1 (1995), pp. 85–126.

226 First discovered by Claud Lovelace, “Pomeron Form Factors and Dual Regge Cuts,” *Physics Letters B*, 34.6 (1971), pp. 500–506.

227 One of the earliest formulations of a brane/bulk model was V.A. Rubakov, and M.E. Shaposhnikov, “Do We Live Inside a Domain Wall?” *Physics Letters B*, 125.2-3 (1983), pp. 136-138. For an overview, see David Langlois, “Brane Cosmology: An Introduction,” *Progress of Theoretical Physics Supplement*, 148 (2003), pp. 181–212. See also Bernard Carr, “Introduction and Overview,” in Bernard Carr (ed.), *Universe or Multiverse?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 6, where he also notes that some versions of M Theory posit a 4D brane in a bulk, p. 13.

228 Full discussion of the possibilities is found in Carr, *Universe or Multiverse?* Carr notes that ‘multiverse’ is also used to mean ‘parallel universes,’ p. 4, although multiple universes are not necessarily parallel universes.

229 Hugh Everett, “Relative State Formulation of Quantum Mechanics,” *Reviews of Modern Physics*, 29.3 (1957), pp. 454–462.

230 Michael J. W. Hall, Dirk-André Deckert, and Howard M. Wiseman, “Quantum Phenomena Modeled by Interactions Between Many Classical Worlds,” *Phys. Rev. X*, 4, 041013 (2014).

231 Bernard Carr, “Space for Psi from Physics,” a paper presented at the “Making Space for Psi,” Study Day 78 of the Society for Psychical Research, London, November 16, 2019.

of consciousness and reality revealed in this paper. Under certain conditions, consciousness demonstrates the ability to transcend space and time as we ordinarily experience it, so as well as another location for consciousness, we also need another time, or another understanding of it.

Near the end of his life, Einstein famously wrote that “The distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.”<sup>232</sup> The problem persists: the British physicist Paul Davies also confessed that “To be perfectly honest, neither scientists nor philosophers really know what time is or why it exists.”<sup>233</sup>

Cambridge Professor of Astronomy, Sir Arthur Eddington coined the phrase “time’s arrow” in 1927, meaning simply that physical things have a necessary and unavoidable direction of change from one state to another that cannot be reversed.<sup>234</sup> This is essentially our experience of time. However, the fundamental equations of classical physics (such as Newton’s laws of motion) do not distinguish between past and future, they are time-reversible, and what we call the present “has no proper place in the temporal of physics at all,” according to the Slovakian astrophysicist Metod Saniga. What physics does is quantify points on the time dimension – it takes no account of subjective, experiential time, the time that moves constantly forwards, the so-called arrow of time.<sup>235</sup>

As Prof. Utts has pointed out, after studying the research data for her official report on Project Star Gate, “Physicists are currently grappling with the concept of time, and cannot rule out precognition as being consistent with current understanding,” and that “distance in time and space do not seem to be an impediment” – exactly the conclusion I came to in my analysis of Scott’s WWI travelling clairvoyance experiments.<sup>236</sup> But the question of time does not only relate to

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232 Albert Einstein, letter of condolence to the family of Michele Besso (March 21, 1955), quoted in Tabatha Yeatts, *Albert Einstein* (New York: Sterling, 2007), p. 116.

233 Paul Davies (Scientific American 15/3 (2005) 82-88)

234 In a lecture later published in Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), pp. 63ff.

235 Metod Saniga, “Algebraic Geometry: A Tool for Resolving the Enigma of Time?” in R. Buccheri, V. di Gesù and M. Saniga (eds), *Studies on the Structure of Time: From Physics to Psycho(patho)logy* (New York: Kluwer Academic / Plenum Publishers, 2000), pp. 137-166. Beyond classical physics, the major exceptions include the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics and the quantum wave function collapse. For more on Saniga’s theory, see Metod Saniga, “Unveiling the Nature of Time: Altered States of Consciousness and Pencil-Generated Space-Times,” *International Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies* (1998); for a discussion of this, see Stephen Battersby, “Einstein on Acid,” *New Scientist*, 180.2426 (December 20, 2003), p. 40. The basis for philosophical arguments against the reality of time were established by F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1893), and J. M. Ellis McTaggart, “The Unreality of Time,” *Mind*, 17.4 (1908), pp. 457–474.

236 Jessica Utts, “An Assessment of the Evidence for Psychic Functioning,” 1995, Approved for Release 2000, Stargate Collection, CREST, CIA-RDP96-00791R000200070001-9, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp96-00791r000200070001-9>, pp. 1, 12; Ruickbie, “What the Maid Saw.”

precognition because, as we have seen, precognition can apply to a range of sensory experiences that are experienced directly by consciousness, not the senses, meaning that what we are talking about here is not some ability of consciousness, but consciousness itself.

We have seen examples where an observer in his present sees an apparition in its past, and even where an apparition sees the observer in its future, then this must logically lead to the premise that time exists in its entirety all of the time, that is, time is not just the movement of physical objects through space (change), but a thing in itself. This itself seems counter-intuitive, but modern physics can support such a possibility.

Albert Einstein's mathematics teacher, Professor Herman Minkowski, argued that the past, present and future co-exist 'at once' in four-dimensional spacetime, where time is itself a dimension in addition to the familiar three spatial dimensions. This was the basis for Einstein's theories of relativity. In contrast to our generally accepted idea of time being absolute for everyone, within these four dimensions, observers moving relative to one another will have a different experience of what is happening now, that is, their experience of time will be different. Thus an observer moving faster than another could experience as 'present' what is for the other 'future.'<sup>237</sup>

This four-dimensional "block universe" in which time exists all at once would allow an external observer (e.g., in the higher dimensional bulk) to see past, present and future, just like someone experiencing an NDE life review or life preview, or someone having a premonition. But how could this be possible?

### *Timetanglement*

In 1983, Don Page and William Wootters showed how the quantum phenomenon of entanglement – where two particles can remain in apparent contact even though separated (non-locality), Einstein's famous "spooky action at a distance" – can be used to measure time. They argued that the way in which entangled particles evolve can be seen as a kind of clock, allowing the measurement of change. An observer within the system could compare this evolution against the rest of the system – the system being the physical universe. In doing so, the observer would be able to measure the passage of time as a relative difference of change between two things. However, an observer outside the system using an external clock to measure change would see no change in the entangled

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<sup>237</sup> See Jan Pilotti, "Does the Future Already Exist?" *Magazine of the Society for Psychical Research* (forthcoming).

particles, meaning that time does not exist. This leads to the conclusion that time is an emergent property of quantum entanglement.<sup>238</sup>

Ingenious though it was, because it was impossible to have an observer outside the universe, the theory could never be tested. That is, until a team of researchers led by Ekaterina Moreva at the Istituto Nazionale di Ricerca Metrologica (INRIM) in Turin, Italy, built their own universe to test it out.<sup>239</sup>

Using two entangled photons in a deceptively simple setup, the experimenters were able to position internal and external “observers” to their mini-universe. In the first condition, the internal observer becomes entangled with the system by measuring it. In the second condition, the external observer remains outside the system and uses an independent measure of time. They discovered that within the universe they could measure change, whilst outside the universe there was no change. Page and Wootters had been right: time is an emergent property of entanglement.

To make this clearer let us try a metaphor. A river appears to be there in all its entirety to an external observer at a sufficient altitude. He can see its source, its in-between points and its mouth; but push him into the river and his observation changes dramatically, suddenly there is flow (passage of time) and the experience of the river is reduced to the point (the present) at which the observer is bobbing about in it. It is only a metaphor, but it gives us a more tangible idea of time as an emergent property of entanglement within a system, “timentanglement.”

### *Quantum of Survival*

If brain is the receiver of consciousness, then it needs some means of receiving. Descartes proposed the pineal gland, and whilst this idea still crops up, modern medical research has thoroughly scotched it.<sup>240</sup> Instead quantum physics provides some possibility of a mechanism to bridge mind and matter. There is evidence for quantum effects in a range of biological processes,<sup>241</sup> naturally researchers have wondered whether brain function could find answers there, too. Several theories of

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238 Don N. Page and William K. Wootters, “Evolution Without Evolution: Dynamics Described by Stationary Observables,” *Phys. Rev. D*, 27, 2885 (1983). See also H. Primas, “Time-Entanglement Between Mind and Matter,” *Mind and Matter*, 1 (2003), pp. 81–119.

239 Ekaterina Moreva, Giorgio Brida, Marco Gramegna, Vittorio Giovannetti, Lorenzo Maccone, Marco Genovese, “Time from Quantum Entanglement: An Experimental Illustration,” *Phys. Rev. A*, 89, 052122 (2014).

240 F. López-Muñoz, G. Rubio, J.D. Molina, and C. Alamo, “The Pineal Gland as Physical Tool of the Soul Faculties: A Persistent Historical Connection,” *Neurología (English Edition)*, 27.3 (April 2012), pp. 161-168.

241 For an overview, see Graham R. Fleming, Gregory D. Scholes, and Yuan-Chung Cheng, “Quantum Effects in Biology,” *Procedia Chemistry*, 3.1 (2011), pp. 38-57.

mind as a quantum process have already emerged.<sup>242</sup> The most well-known is Oxford physicist Sir Roger Penrose and Prof. Stuart Hameroff's explanation using quantum gravity and vibrations in fractal protein structures (microtubules) in neurons to argue that the microtubules function as quantum computing devices.<sup>243</sup> This is especially convincing in light of recent experimental findings in its favour.<sup>244</sup>

In quantum computing, bits of information (qubits) exist simultaneously in an 'on' and 'off' state called superposition (this is what Schrödinger's Cat is all about: being dead and alive until observed (measured)) before being unified into a single 'calculation' or 'decision.' Penrose and Hameroff argue that this takes place in the neuronal microtubules as an 'orchestrated' spacetime modification or 'objective reduction' of superposition. Hence the theory is known as Orchestrated Objective Reduction (Orch-OR). Hameroff described it as being like an orchestra, by which he meant that coherent meaning (the sound of the music) is created by vibrating structures (the playing of the instruments), with the musicians' decision to play/not play being the objective reduction.<sup>245</sup>

The quantum state represents an information process: both one thing *and* the other, in the way light can be both a particle and a wave, until measurement causes a collapse of the wavefunction and it becomes one *or* the other. By modulating electromagnetic waves (light, infrared, radio, etc.) we can encode information; Mother Nature seems to do this with quantum states. This is the 'bridge' between cloud consciousness and the physical body.

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242 See the overview by Harald Atmanspacher, "Quantum Approaches to Consciousness," in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/qt-consciousness/>, covering: Stapp's application of quantum superposition (all states are parallel probabilities) and collapse (observer effect) to consciousness; Vitiello and Freeman's quantum field theory of brain states, especially memory; Beck and Eccles theory of a quantum process of information transfer at the synaptic cleft. A theory based on the necessity for consciousness to be the 'observer' causing wavefunction collapse in spacetime was recently proposed by Stuart Kauffman, and Dean Radin, "Is Mind Quantum?" *PsyArXiv* (2 Jan. 2021), <https://psyarxiv.com/qejzr/>, accessed August 6, 2021.

243 Stuart Hameroff, and Roger Penrose, "Conscious Events as Orchestrated Spacetime Selections," *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 3.1 (1996), pp. 36–53; Stuart Hameroff, and Roger Penrose, "Consciousness in the Universe: A review of the Orch OR Theory (with Commentaries and Replies)," *Physics of Life Reviews*, 11 (2014), pp. 39–112.

244 For evidence of quantum vibrations in microtubules, see S. Sahu, S. Ghosh, K. Hirata, D. Fujita, and A. Bandyopadhyay, "Multi-Level Memory-Switching Properties of a Single Brain Microtubule," *Applied Physics Letters*, 102, 123701 (2013). Nuclear spin has been proposed as a more robust quantum process instead of microtubule vibration, see Matthew P.A. Fisher, "Quantum Cognition: The Possibility of Processing with Nuclear Spins in the Brain," *Annals of Physics*, 362 (2015), pp. 593-602.

245 Hameroff's actual description was somewhat more impenetrable, see Stuart Hameroff, "Is Your Brain Really a Computer, or is It a Quantum Orchestra?" *Huffpost* (2015), [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/is-your-brain-really-a-co\\_b\\_7756700](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/is-your-brain-really-a-co_b_7756700) – a reply to Gary Marcus, "Face It, Your Brain Is a Computer," *New York Times* (June 27, 2015), [https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/opinion/sunday/face-it-your-brain-is-a-computer.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/opinion/sunday/face-it-your-brain-is-a-computer.html?_r=1)

Penrose and Hameroff both saw the metaphysical implications of this. Hameroff made it clear that “The connection to space–time geometry also raises the intriguing possibility that Orch-OR allows consciousness apart from the brain and body, distributed and entangled in space–time geometry,” and that “quantum information can exist outside the body, perhaps indefinitely, as a soul.”<sup>246</sup> Mathematical physicist Henry Stapp has also been working on quantum theories of consciousness and similarly concluded that “aspects of a personality might be able to survive bodily death.”<sup>247</sup>

Support comes from another area.<sup>248</sup> Grappling with the problem of how to define information in physics, Oxford physicist Prof. David Deutsch, a pioneer in quantum computing, proposed Constructor Theory. This describes a deeper level of physics more fundamental than particles and waves, and spacetime. Deutsch had been working on the premise that “the quantum theory of computation is the whole of physics,” i.e., it is the underlying level, but realized that, although quantum computation can simulate any other object, including its characteristic programmes, it cannot relate which programme connects with which object, which requires another level of explanation. Constructor Theory answers this by being more fundamental as it concerns the laws governing what is possible and what is not – it is a law about physical laws.<sup>249</sup>

Information seems abstract but only a physical object can compute information and that for the theory of information to work within physics, then it must have a physical quantity, yet physical information is independent of the physical object that contains it. As an example, take the writing of this essay: the words are formed in my mind, transferred through nerves to my fingers where they are expressed as kinetic energy hitting the keyboard and stored as digital information on my hard

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246 Stuart Hameroff, “Quantum Coherence in Microtubules,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 1 (1994), p. 98.

247 Henry P. Stapp, “Bell’s Theorem and World Process.” *Il Nuovo Cimento*, 29 (1975), p. 270; see also H.P. Stapp, “A Quantum Theory of the Mind-Brain Interface,” in *Mind, Matter, and Quantum Mechanics* (Berlin: Springer, 1993), pp. 145–172; Henry P. Stapp, “Compatibility of Contemporary Physical Theory with Personality Survival” (unpublished, c.2009), <https://www-atlas.lbl.gov/~stapp/Compatibility.pdf>, accessed August 14, 2021; and Henry P. Stapp, “A Quantum-Mechanical Theory of the Mind-Brain Connection,” in Edward F. Kelly, et al. (eds.), *Beyond Physicalism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), pp. 157-193.

248 There is only room to consider one avenue here, but Penrose and Hameroff’s work introduces quantum fractals, which are associated with the holographic principle, and much additional research has been conducted in this area as it relates to consciousness. As a starting point, see Karl Pribram, *Brain and Perception: Holonomy and Structure in Figural Processing* (New York: Psychology Press, 2011 [1991]), and in relation to physics, see Leonard Susskind, “The World as a Hologram,” *Journal of Mathematical Physics*. 36.11 (1995), pp. 6377-6396. Hameroff has stated that he believes Pribram’s holographic model to be correct, Hameroff, “Is Your Brain Really a Computer?” This of course reminds us of Henri Bergson’s proto-holographic theorizing on the mind.

249 David Deutsch, “Constructor Theory: A Conversation with David Deutsch,” *Edge* (October 22, 2012), [https://www.edge.org/conversation/david\\_deutsch-constructor-theory](https://www.edge.org/conversation/david_deutsch-constructor-theory); David Deutsch, “Constructor Theory,” arXiv:1210.7439v2 (2012, revised 2013).

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drive, this is then transferred across the internet to be reconfigured as the text you are now reading, a light signal received by your eyes and interpreted by your brain to produce the sensation of hearing these words in your mind. The information has crossed biological and man-made systems, it has been electrical, electromagnetic and kinetic energy at different times. At every point in the process the information has been something and resided in something, but the two were not dependent – the only constant in this process was the information, so we must think of the information as more fundamental. If information is independent of the system, and that information is consciousness (as quantum states of qubits) and the system the body, then the death of the body does not mean the end of consciousness.

If time is an emergent property from quantum entanglement and consciousness is information expressed through a quantum process or bridging, then we have the grounds for consciousness surviving outside of its entanglement with the physical, and therefore outside of time itself. This must occur outside the four-dimensional spacetime block universe (both the *brain* and the *brane*), but physics has ample dimensions to accommodate it.

## THE GHOST IN THE TIME MACHINE

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“While it is absurd to affirm the existence of the impossible, it is idle to deny the possibility of the actual.” – H.F. Saltmarsh<sup>250</sup>

Take a shaft of light and pass it through a prism and it reveals that rich rainbow of colours that make up what we see. That is my approach here. I have taken the beam of paranormal experience and passed it through a prism to reveal its different frequencies, but where some researchers specialize, perhaps only studying the red or the blue, I have wanted to studying this whole spectrum, because it is the whole spectrum that tells us what light is.<sup>251</sup>

As defined at the beginning, ‘ghost’ means an immaterial identity format (IIF), the conscious ‘I’, and we looked for it specifically in the three categories of experiential time. What we have found is evidence for ghosts of the past in Martindale’s Roman soldiers, and others, and also in the life review that is often a part of the NDE, as well as in the huge amount of evidence for reincarnation. We found ghosts of the present in the form of crisis apparitions and after-death communications, as well as evidence for the ability for consciousness to leave the body as a result of accident, illness or intention in various conditions termed OBEs, NDEs (and actual-death experiences), travelling clairvoyance, etc. Ghosts of the future were apparent in premonitions, memorably when Irene Kuhn saw her own ‘ghost’ in the future, but we also saw disembodied consciousness show itself to be conscious at a point beyond physical death in the past, and how consciousness beyond the body could witness the life preview of what was yet to come.

The argument put forward does not rely on one piece of evidence, or one case, so if one case is found in error it does not derail the overall argument. In fact, for each area of evidence considered, many other cases could be brought forward if needed. As said at the beginning, the amount of evidence is not the problem – the problem is why we do not believe it.

The witness was always the weakest link in the chain of evidence. As far as possible we sought to establish the credibility and reliability of the witness, and to consider possible motives. When a witness is credible, reliable and motiveless, then we must take them at their word. They could still be mistaken, ill, drugged, or another explanation, such as telepathy might be produced. This is

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250 H.F. Saltmarsh, *Foreknowledge*, p. 102.

251 Of course, I am not claiming to be the first to consider several types of phenomena as giving evidence of survival; many were there before me, such as A.T. Baird, *One Hundred Cases*; David Fontana, *Is There An Afterlife? A Comprehensive Overview of the Evidence* (Winchester, UK: O-Books, 2005; and Leslie Kean, *Surviving Death*.

where multiple witnesses to the same event are of paramount value. Where otherwise credible, reliable and motiveless witnesses agree, it would be unreasonable to insist on their being wrong.

Even if right in having witnessed something, the explanation of what that something is could still be different. Shared hallucination or group telepathy have been forwarded, but such explanations become more difficult to uphold when information is acquired from the experience that the witnesses would not otherwise have had.

This higher level of evidentiality was also matched by using statistics to achieve a greater degree of representativeness. Even the best witness could still be an exception proving nothing. This is why we also used statistical analyses of sometimes thousands of cases to resolve the quirks, leaving a higher level of probability – a level of evidence beyond reasonable doubt.

It has already been noted that the evidence for life after death would be sufficient to prove the case in a court of law. One of the earliest to do so was author John Vyvyan (1908–1975). Writing in 1966, he said “a jury might well be convinced of a life after death on the basis of these arguments.”<sup>252</sup> Since then, researchers have amassed almost sixty years’ worth of additional evidence in every area concerned with life after death. If it were enough to convince a jury then, how much more so now?

Have I convinced myself? Having now laid out the ‘best’ evidence and connected the dots, as it were, the Scrooge in me may still be thinking of my stomach, but the scientist must acknowledge the evidence even when it contradicts cherished theories. This evidence leads necessarily to the conclusion that our ‘ghost,’ consciousness, can exist independently of space and time, the fundamental co-ordinates of the body. Such a bold claim has been made before, but this time we have also seen that modern physics has revealed a universe in which just such a state could exist where consciousness itself is a quantum process and time is an emergent property of quantum entanglement, timetanglement.

The British philosopher Gilbert Ryle coined the term “ghost in the machine” to sum up the mind–body dualism espoused by René Descartes, and others since, that the mind and body are separate. Ryle thought that Descartes had made a category mistake,<sup>253</sup> but whether philosophically in error or not, we have seen that there are copious examples of the mind acting independently of the body, even *existing* independently of the body in cases of actual death. And that in those states,

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252 John Vyvyan, *A Case Against Jones: A Study of Psychic Phenomena* (London: James Clark & Co., 1966) – the Jones in question being the prominent British psychoanalyst Ernest Jones (1879–1958).

253 Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).

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consciousness is described as operating not only outside of the body (space), but outside of time as well. We realise that it is the physical body that creates time for the mind, that the ghost is not just in a machine, but in a time machine.