

Paradigm Explorer



The Scientific & Medical Network

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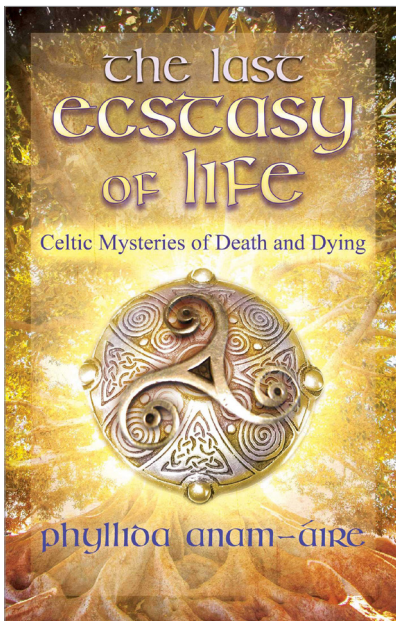
The Consciousness of Neuroscience

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Does Art Still Matter?



The story of our wounding may be more ancient than we are, and some of our choices may well be based on unconscious resonance with a dead ancestor. Interestingly, Phyllida identifies the reptilian brain as the receptacle for such unfinished business. She discusses six natural feelings that need to find expression if they are not to become dysfunctional: anger, fear, jealousy, love, grief and sexuality. We need to listen to our own inner guidance and follow it to freedom. In her view, we are divine beings learning to be human and can all access the healing power of Love, which we essentially are. There is great compassion in this approach.

The final chapter embraces the sacred mysteries of both birth and death. Phyllida disagrees with the religious view with which she was imbued as a nun that the physical is inferior to spirit. She recalls that she even to the extent of self-whipping, representing a hatred of self and the body, which she interprets as a fear of eros – quite the opposite of the Tantric approach. She reminds readers that dying is a natural act, and describes the use of holy oils in the last rites. Like Michel Odent in relation to the birth process, she is wary of too much technological and human interference. She writes that the more evolved we are spiritually at the time of death, the more joy we can experience in the dying process, but of course this is a lifetime of work – ‘we get the death we are prepared to die’ and ‘those who live soulfully die fully into soul.’ (p. 135) The review process may involve regret at actions of non-love, which calls for self-compassion. Her view on organ donation is that this may keep the soul earthbound – and the organ will still be pulsating with the vibration of the one who died. (p. 144) There is deep life wisdom weaving throughout this chapter, making it as much a guide to living as dying. The final section contains pertinent questions and answers, along with some beautiful Celtic blessings and poems. I recommend that readers study both books as primers on the art of living and especially of dying as a preparation for a journey that we

will all undertake.

Your Dying

*When your own song seduces you
Back into the symphony again
Let your throat widen into eternity
And rent the seas apart with the force of your passion
So that life may play the strings of your soul
In total magnificence. SEA [so be it]*

A CONTINUITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

David Lorimer

■ SPONTANEOUS CONTACTS WITH THE DECEASED

Evelyn Elsaesser (SMN)

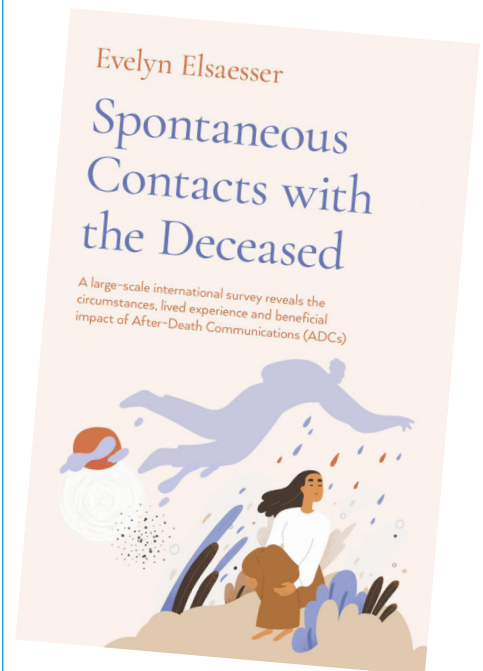
Iff Books (John Hunt), 2023,
321 pp., £17.99, p/b – ISBN
978-1-80341-228-3

In 1971, Network Member Dr Dewi Rees published a study in the British Medical Journal entitled *The hallucinations of widowhood*. The use of the term hallucination reflects the materialistic understanding of the human being still prevalent in medical circles, where the idea of the continuity of consciousness after death is unthinkable. Even now, it is advisable to include the word hallucination in the title if submitting an article to a medical journal. For instance, an article published by Evelyn and her team in the British Journal of Psychiatry Open was entitled *The phenomenology and impact of the hallucinations concerning the deceased*. Hallucination implies unreality, which is in direct contradiction to experiences of spontaneous contact with the deceased.

This landmark book summarises the qualitative and quantitative findings of a large-scale international survey on the nature and impact of After-Death Communications (ADCs). The project team includes Evelyn, Prof Chris Roe, Dr Callum Cooper, myself, and, more recently, Sophie Morrison. The approach is phenomenological and, in other words it makes no metaphysical claims even though strong inferences can be made, for instance on the basis of over 100 cases where the deceased gave information unknown to the ‘experient’ but subsequently verified. ADCs are unexpected, spontaneous and direct. As Rees found in his initial survey 50 years ago, more than half of widows experienced one or more ADCs. In other words, they are in fact common and normal. The significance of ADCs needs to be understood in the wider context of other converging evidence from NDEs, spontaneous past life memories, and survival research. The questionnaire developed by the team consisted of 194 questions covering the circumstances and phenomenology of ADCs and their impact on the experient. Over 1,000 questionnaires were completed, in French (440), English (416) and Spanish (148). 85% of respondents were women, and half had university degrees.

The main types of ADCs are sensing a presence, hearing a voice, feeling a physical contact, seeing the deceased, and smelling a fragrance. The value of this study lies in its combination of statistical analysis with vivid and detailed descriptions of actual experiences and their surrounding circumstances. Sometimes, the presence is felt as a strong energy or love, and voices are described as transmitted sensations or telepathic. The main message is one of loving concern, summarised by Evelyn as a reassuring, resolving, reaffirming and releasing. 62% of all participants had an ADC during sleep, when falling asleep or waking up, and of these 61% were sound asleep. The vast majority – 85% – immediately recognised the deceased. 21% experienced an ADC at the time of death (in 44% of cases, the death was not predictable); research into this type of ‘crisis apparition’ experience goes back to 1886, with the publication of a 1,200-page analysis – *Phantasms of the Living* – by Gurney, Podmore and Myers.

The findings show the considerable impact of ADCs on belief systems. Before the ADC, 69% believed in an afterlife, 20% were unsure, and 11% did not believe in it. Subsequently, these figures are 93%, 6%, and 1% – this speaks for itself. Likewise, before the ADC 63% believed that the deceased could contact the living, rising to 95% after the ADC. 31% said that their fear of death had decreased, while for 30% it had disappeared. There is a greater effect on spirituality than religion, with 36% considering themselves spiritual before the ADC, compared to 64% afterwards. Belief in the authenticity of ADCs rose from 41% to 77% – and 90% with hindsight. As one might expect in terms of the information transmitted and the emotions felt, the impact of ADCs on the bereavement process is significant – life-changing for 36% and important for 49%; and in 73% of cases there was an emotional healing. The feeling of continuing love was most comforting, with a mitigating effect



on sadness and a feeling of gratitude for life shared.

A further significant finding was that more than a quarter of respondents were no longer grieving or had never grieved for the deceased person they perceived. The impact of the experiences testifies to their personal significance, and they are vividly recalled years later. As Kenneth Ring notes in his endorsement, this book really serves to put ADCs on the map from a scientific and sociological perspective as a common and therefore normal human experience. However, for me, the personal accounts spoke most clearly and directly to an expanded view of consciousness and its continuity, with significant details about surrounding circumstances that convey a strong sense of authenticity. Essential and informative reading.

LIFE LESSONS FROM THE NDE

David Lorimer

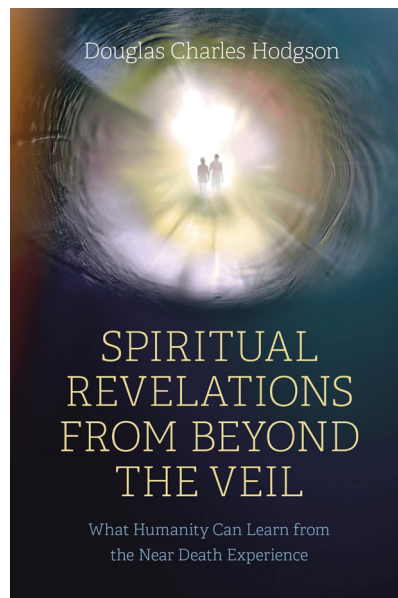
■ SPIRITUAL REVELATIONS FROM BEYOND THE VEIL

Douglas Charles Hodgson

Orbis Books, 2023, 135 pp., £11.99, p/b – ISBN 978-1-80341-340-2

Douglas Hodgson is a former Dean and Professor of Law living in Perth, Australia. His legal books have focused on human rights and justice, while I reviewed in these pages his most recent book on transcendental spirituality, wisdom and virtue. Here he turns his considerable analytical and synthetic powers to categorising and describing insights from hundreds of near-death experiences from the IANDS website – hence, his subtitle ‘what humanity can learn from the near-death experience.’ The result is in my view the finest synthesis I have read of profound and converging insights on the nature of reality, consciousness and the purpose of human life. As such, it reads like a users’ manual for living a fully human life. The contents are set out in a series of bullet points, which means that some sentences will speak more clearly and directly to individual readers. As is the case with Evelyn’s book reviewed above, NDEs have a radically transformative impact on belief systems.

The best way of conveying a flavour is to report on insights that particularly struck me as I read through the various chapters. God/The Source is characterised as Light, Love, Oneness or universal Consciousness: ‘God is an entity of infinite loving energy without beginning or end; subsisting in every dimension, seen and unseen...He is Love. I felt it. I knew Him. I was part of Him... God is immanent within His creation but the creation is all a part of God;’ (panentheism) and, interestingly, ‘we are not God, but God is us.’ Heaven is a state of love, light, joy and bliss: ‘profound unconditional love, total acceptance and forgiveness.’ ‘Everything is one. We are all connected...



We are part of everything and everything is part of us.’ ‘Our soul is energy, light, essence and consciousness.’ ‘You are simultaneously everything and nothing.’ ‘There is nothing to fear. We are all Divine entities;’ ‘Do not fear death and the unknown; upon rebirth in the spirit world, all-knowingness returns;’ ‘Unclutter your mind. Detach from the material world.’

In the higher spiritual realms, ‘belief, faith and trust in God are superseded by a certainty of knowing, and awareness of, God... Empathy, understanding, forgiveness and acceptance allow the soul to progress to the higher realms.’ ‘Time and space do not exist in the higher realms which are folded and collapsed into oneness;’ ‘Anger, greed and negative emotions do not exist in the higher realms;’ ‘In the spiritual realm, knowledge and information are ‘downloaded’ into your consciousness... Souls have full access to the universal data structure... the soul and all of its questions will receive instantaneous answers (this was the experience reported by Walter Russell)...there is no sense of time or self.’ ‘Love is the answer; Communication is the key.’ Communication, as Swedenborg already reported in the 18th century, is telepathic. On the purpose of life and meaning: ‘Essentially, we are here to learn and to love and be loved; to develop loving and caring relationships. We are here to expand within ourselves our capacity for unconditional love... and to manifest it towards other beings.’ The challenge, as already recognised by the Gnostics, is that we forget who we truly are: ‘the energy of love is the essence of life.’

‘Life is not a series of coincidences but of choices made, and we remain responsible for the consequences at the soul level.’ We are here to live fully in the present moment, and to love Nature and all life forms.’ ‘The laws of attraction and cause and effect are universal: ‘Your thoughts and feelings create your life and your own reality...Energy flows where your attention goes...Like attracts like. Positive attracts positive; negative attracts

negative.... Worry and fear attract just that into your life.’ We live in a universe of energy – ‘we are the life-force or energy that is one with God... Everything exists in a continual balance between light and darkness; positive and negative... Love is the vibrational energy flowing through and connecting all things like an electric current.’ ‘Fear does not exist in the Divine realms; it is an instrument of earthly control.’ ‘The physical body is a temporary vessel, which we depart at death, transitioning into another realm... death is returning Home for debriefing and reprogramming.’ The life review is a stock-take, evaluation or exit interview to ask what we have done with our lives, and how we loved, helped and cared for others. We will need to forgive ourselves, and come to realise the significance of small acts of kindness.

In his conclusion, Douglas notes the limitations of the dominant view that consciousness depends exclusively on the functioning human brain. The contents of this book are an implicit refutation of this proposition, and provide a unique treasure trove of life wisdom and advice, reminding us that all is an interconnected oneness, that life is a precious gift, that our souls are the energy that is one with that of God/Source and that ‘Love is the most powerful force in existence.’ As the Bulgarian sage Peter Deunov put it: when we return to the invisible world, we will be examined on how we have applied the law of love. In this remarkable compilation, you will be able to glean the essence of the love and wisdom that we are here to learn and apply. It is sure to be the most important book you will read this year, and to which you will often wish to return for further inspiration and insight.

ECOLOGY-POLITICS

NEW REFLECTIONS ON THE CHRISTIAN CREATION STORY

Peter Reason

■ MEDITATIONS ON CREATION IN AN ERA OF EXTINCTION

Kate Rigby

Orbis Books, 2023, 240 pp., £24.99, p/b – ISBN 978-1-626985-50-6

Kate Rigby introduces her book by pointing to a peculiarity of human beings: we tend to puzzle over our very existence. Why are we here? What are we good for? What is our purpose? How should we answer these fundamental questions about the human place in the scheme of things in the Anthropocene, a time of threatening ecological collapse and widespread human injustice. How do we hear the deeply interconnected ‘cry of the Earth’ and the ‘cry of the poor’?

In this book, Rigby, Alexander von Humboldt Professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Cologne,