# **Comments on Near Death Experience**

I finally got around to reading Raymond Moody’s classic Life After Life. I read it over three decades ago but I was just warming up to Evangelicalism so it made no impression that I remember. It was a pleasant surprise to reread it now after delving into this phenomenon of NDEs. He has much good comment to make and shares some interesting accounts. He is right that it opens up a whole new world and a change in our collective worldview.

In her foreword Kubler-Ross says that our lives are evaluated and interpreted not according to how much money we make or our status or prestige but according to the  love we share with others throughout our lives. And that we die conscious with an expanded awareness.

Moody goes over the same basic features of NDEs that others recount and makes good comment on varied aspects of the experience. He notes the ineffability of these, “inexpressible...there are no words to express what I am trying to say...they just don’t make adjectives and superlatives to describe this”. One person said there are more than three dimensions.

Others note the absence of pain, the warmth and extreme comfort, the most wonderful feelings, the peace, ease, quietness, that all troubles are gone, the relief, relaxation, that all was good. “The most wonderful, worry-free experience...feeling of utter peace and quiet, no fear at all”.

Others felt that  they were in no body at all, “They felt as though they were ‘pure’ consciousness”. Others speak of weightlessness, timelessness. Thought is more lucid and rapid, movement is unimpeded. Senses are heightened and more perfect. Able to look any where and everywhere. One had the feeling that “everything was all right”.

And again the encounter with the being of light, “unearthly brilliance...indescribable brilliance...a personal being...the love and warmth emanate...utterly beyond words...surrounded and taken up by it...accepted in the presence of this being”

Others note that communication is direct, unimpeded transfer of thoughts and the theme recurs of being asked the question of what  have you done with your life in terms of love. Even this review, “is not at all asked in condemnation...the being...does not direct the question to them or accuse them or threaten them, for they still feel the total love and acceptance coming from the light no matter what their answer might be...the point of the question seems to be to  make them think about their lives, to draw them out...to help the person to proceed along the path to the truth by themselves”

“It was so beautiful and so bright, so radiant...not like any kind of light you can describe on earth...yet it has a special identity...it is a light of perfect understanding and perfect love...I felt as though I were surrounded by an overwhelming love and compassion...the moment the light spoke to me, I felt really good, secure and loved. The love which came from it is just unimaginable, indescribable. It had a sense of humor too- definitely”

Moody then notes how these experiences stress love and knowledge, learning. As one person said after feeling the emphasis on learning, “I was going to continue learning...there will always be a quest for knowledge...that it is a continuous process”.

Moody says people having these experiences view them not as dreams but as real events which actually happened. As one said, “It was real...the experience is so indescribable, so far beyond human language and human modes of perception and existence that it is fruitless to even try”.

Another said, “it made life so much more precious to me”.

Moody says, “Almost everyone has stressed the importance in this life of trying to cultivate love for others, a love of a unique and profound kind. One man felt totally loved and accepted even while his whole life was displayed. He felt the question the being of light was asking him was whether he was able to love others in the same way. He now feels that it is his commission on earth to try to learn to be able to do so...(others) felt it was intimated to them that the acquisition of knowledge continues even in the after-life...no matter how old you are, don’t stop learning. For this is a process that goes on for eternity”

Others conclude there is no such thing as death. It is a homecoming, a release.

Moody then notes that none of the people experiencing NDEs has ever painted a mythological picture of what lies hereafter. No cartoonists heaven of pearly gates, golden streets, and winged harp-playing angels nor a hell of flames and demons with pitchforks.

And here is the statement that above all smacked me firmly in the face as I read Moody. Get this, “In most cases, the reward-punishment model of the afterlife is abandoned and disavowed, even by many who had been accustomed to thinking in those terms. They found, much to their amazement, that even when their most apparently awful and sinful deeds were being made manifest before the being of light, the being responded not with anger and rage, but rather only with understanding and even humor...His attitude when we came to these scenes was just that I had been learning”. These people then return with a new understanding of reality, that it is about cooperative development towards the ultimate end of self-realization, the development of the soul, especially in the spiritual faculties of love and knowledge which does not stop at death.

Others again speak of the feeling of complete peace and utter relaxation. One spoke of the reassurance he received that when he actually and finally died there would be no fear, he did not want this man to be afraid, that he would be there for him in the end. This brought peace, calmness and a serenity that was never experienced before.

Others speak of the vividness and realness, more so than ordinary experience. One said, “I don’t have any doubts anymore. I know there is life after death”.

Moody then recounts similar experiences in the Bible, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, and the experience of other ancients like Plato.

Because few people feel ready to speak openly about these experiences for fear of being thought insane, Moody believes, “an enormous mass of material lies hidden in the minds of persons” having such experiences.

Fascinating material.

Julia, Bob, some interesting works out there in regard to this NDE field of research. I am not really recommending this one by two PhDs, Mormons I believe (The Eternal Journey). It sets forth what appears to be a very Mormon view of death and afterlife experience, drawing noticeably on older accounts of NDEs. There is some mention of love here and there in regard to NDEs but this is almost lost in the later extensive detail on requirements, payment according to deeds (assigned levels and place), and other earned rewards. Some very strange accounts of barred entry, warrior angels and guardian angels much like the angel guarding the gates of Eden after the Fall. And other accounts of angel guards accompanying, watching and prohibiting entry to underserved places reserved for the more advanced. Sort of like North Korea in heaven. And much detailed accounting regarding clothing and buildings and what not.

Despite much questionable comment shaped by their religious perspective, the light of real NDE reality repeatedly pokes through. It is hard to hide that light with one’s religious perspective. Near the end the authors finally concede some more ground to unconditional love as though it can’t be entirely denied but its clarity can get lost amongst all the other previous comment on levels, barred entry and so on. So what did the people reported in this book actually see? I think this can be partly explained in the fact that consciousness does not appear to automatically become fully enlightened at death but continues to develop, learn, grow.  It would have been helpful if the authors had connected more fully with elements of their own tradition such as the parables of Jesus to get some basic sense of divine generosity.

Interesting that such accounts (judgment, barred entry, etc.) can stir old religious feelings regarding judgment, payback, loss, separation and what not. Good to refocus one’s spirit on the brilliant and purifying light of unconditional love.

And  the authors do make some helpful points amongst all the rest- a few quotes: “how we view death determines how we live life...everything seemed to be made of light...it comes from within and appears to be a living essence...glowing...love seems to be the guiding principle of post-earth life...(beings of light) they glow. They are beings of light, not reflected light, but light that comes from within. This light is felt as pure love, complete peace, and total acceptance....I will never be afraid of death...the feeling of God’s love and compassion sweeping through me. It was awesome- in the true meaning of the word...light engulfed him with a feeling of intense warmth and total love...true love and the little things we do for others are what really matter... (during a life review) they just loved me. Their love was tangible, You could feel it in your body, you could feel it inside you, their love went right through you... (NDEs) reveal that all life has meaning, that we all have some purpose for being on earth, and that death does not destroy our relationships...however, most important in life and death is love. If there is a single message that characterizes the NDE, it is love. It fills the next world and engulfs those who go there and experience it...NDEers feel the  most important message they bring back with them is that we should love everybody with unconditional love...God and love are one and the same and these are the only things that matter in the whole damned universe...what really counts is what you did for others- how much you loved beyond yourself- how much you really loved and how well...death is not the end of life, just the opposite. It is the beginning of real life”.

Julia, responding to your fascinating comments on what lies behind and Swimme and others, let me add this from You Can See The Light by Dianne Morrissey. Her account of her NDE is refreshing as are most of these that point to the indescribable love and light they encounter. This NDE phenomenon is taking us further than quantum science and its pointing to consciousness. It is pointing to the real core nature of reality and life. Morrissey after her account of her experience in the first chapter then goes on to urging people to seek this out of body experience via dreaming or whatever and my interest faded there but the first chapter account is worth the book. My feeling since getting into this material last spring has been that the love element validates the experience and science is left at the periphery here. But what can be learned from this spiritual experience can then be brought back into the realm of science, the natural world, to explain much here. To bring light into a dark place.

Morrissey tries to explain the love she experienced, “Rapture and peace were beyond my wildest imaginings...do you remember how it felt, long ago, to be held and rocked in your mother’s loving arms? Take this to the hundredth power and you’re still light years away from the feeling of total peace and comfort that surrounded me. I felt the love of every mother in the universe being poured inside me for now and all eternity....nothing ever dies, nothing ever dies! I also knew that I would never die...but I would feel this unbelievable love around me forever...within the light, I knew that everyone and everything is connected to it. God is in everyone, always and forever....I was no longer afraid of death, in fact, I knew that death was fantastic, death was wonderful, death was radiant and peaceful...God was still with me, still inside me- inside everybody and everything...I knew this absolute truth. God was part of me and everyone else...no one ever dies...God is inside everything and all of us”. And more.

She also, as the two Mormon scientists do, points to the nature of everything as essentially light. This inward essence of everything. Even grasses, fruit trees and so on. Fascinating

Just another thought here re a guiding beacon sort of central theme. I was thinking of the Jesus tradition and how he was able to stay centered on his core message of unconditional love despite the surrounding climate of apocalyptic, harsh judgment, payback thinking and so much more darkness of his time. He was able to reassure people that their son was not born blind due to the parent’s sin (human suffering was not punishment for being imperfectly  human, it was not retaliation by a vengeful deity), and the birds being fed, the grass being wondrously clothed, and all receiving rain and sun was evidence of divine generosity and goodness. He saw through clouding dark thought patterns to a brilliant light of something else. And he remained centered on that.

This applies also to this NDE research and accounting. I have read over 20 books on this and according to Ken Rings bibliography I have more than 50 to go. Some of the accounts are fascinating as they reaffirm so powerfully the core message of Jesus. Others contain good material but then offer additional comment that is clouding rather than affirming of unconditional love. Usually these are the interpretations of religious people- Mormons, Christians, others. You then get accounts of levels of attainment and consequent reward, barred entry, threat, and even punishment. Purgatories and all the rest. Not much of unconditional love in such accounts, even though in other parts of the same book you will find references to unconditional love.

In light of this unconditional love as people like Jesus understood it, can be a centering reference point, a guiding beacon to what is true (truly human or  humane, true love) and what is wishful or distorted thinking shaped by the mind’s commitment to some religious doctrine. Jesus was able to repeatedly do this despite an overwhelming climate of darkness surrounding him, a climate of thought that saw something entirely different from what he saw.

Much like Bob’s comment that presented with the same set of facts, different people will come to quite different conclusions about what they see.  Even Jonathan Kay had something to say about this in the Post this morning, “The ideologically engaged mind is drawn to interpret every tragedy through the lens of pre-existing dogmas...even the finest mind can be seduced by this dogmatic reflex” (he was writing of the response to the attack  in Tuscon Arizona this past week and the blame that followed- trying to blame it on the poisonous political discourse).