

Article

The Experience of the Brink of Death & the Life after Death in Religion (Part I)

Kamel B. Salem*

Department of Computer Science, University of Tunis El Manar, Tunis, Tunisia

Abstract

As the intensive care techniques improve, more and more patients are brought back to life from the frontier of clinical death. Some of them tell about their significantly intense experience when they seem to live and function outside their body. First, we shall present the various stages of a near death experience (NDE). We shall particularly explain why the observed phenomena during an NDE are troubling and destabilizing for the adepts of certain religions. Second, we shall analyze and interpret these phenomena according to different points of view. We then discuss life in the hereafter and exhibit some of its properties. In this paper we shall also raise the issue of premonitory dreams which constitute a mystery for scientists.

Part I of this two-part article includes: 1. Introduction; 2. The Main Stages of the Experience on the Brink of Death; 3. Assessment & Interpretation of the Facts Observed during an NDE.

Key Words: birth, death, NDE, Near Death Experience, brink of death, life after death, Bible, Quran, Buddhism, Hinduism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our birth initiates a process leading to our death. The concept of a life after death constitutes one of the founding principles of all the major religions. However, there remains to elucidate the most intriguing mystery: Is there proof of the existence of a life after death? For many years, this mystery has generated a raging debate between the faithful and the skeptics, but the NDE has proved to be a powerful argument in favor of the existence of an afterlife.

First of all, we must explain the nature of a near death experience. According to the International Association for Near Death Studies (IANDS), this experience is defined as a lucid experience of an out of body conscious perception occurring at the moment of real death, the risk of death or in the wake of a critical medical case [30].

The experience of near death consists in that the spirit of the person in question leaves the body momentarily. In this out of body situation, the spirit can evolve within the spiritual world.

We may classify the NDEs into two major categories: the positive experiences and the negative experiences [29].

* Correspondence: Professor Kamel B. Salem, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Sciences of Tunis, University of Tunis El Manar, Tunis, Tunisia.. Email: kamel.bensalem@fst.rnu.tn

1.1 Positive NDEs

The individuals who lived this experience reported that they soon regained consciousness, had the feeling of finding themselves outside their body and were able to perceive everything around them in detail (the efforts to reanimate them for example). Then, there follows the perception of a kind of tunnel with a very attractive light at its end, which is described as strong but not blinding. In the course of their journey through this tunnel, deceased relatives and/or a being of light are met. This meeting is characterized by intense feelings of love, joy and peace. Some witnesses reported that they were able to view a panoramic display of their entire life. Frequently, the more one approached the end of the tunnel the more the observed light took the shape of a forbidden barrier. At that instant, the subjects understood or were made to understand that they had to come back to earth and that their life must go on.

1.2 Negative NDEs

For the moment, the statistics show that the negative experiences are estimated at 4 to 5% of cases. Actually, it is not easy to determine the significance of such estimates for the simple reason that even those who underwent positive experiences found a great difficulty in expressing it, let alone those who underwent negative ones! Obviously, the person who saw 'Hell' during an NDE will never muster enough courage to express it and will rather seek to put together this perception of this experience of a deserved hell and his/her past causing to the subject a post-traumatic stress. It is to be noted that the statistics show that the negative NDEs often end in suicide attempts.

Generally speaking, the negative NDEs may be distinguished in three categories: infernal NDEs, meaningless NDEs and inverted NDEs.

1.2.1 Infernal NDEs

These are entirely the opposite of the positive experiences in that the subjects, instead of moving up to meet the light, they rather go down towards darkness where linger thousands of people screaming from heat and thirst in the presence of devilish beings. This situation is quite similar to our traditional vision of Hell and this is why we termed these NDEs infernal.

1.2.2 Meaningless NDEs

In the meaningless NDEs, the subjects will find themselves alone in an absolute eternal void which would trigger a feeling of terror, rather understandable. Sometimes, geometrical shapes are perceived in this nothingness from which ironic manifestations transpire. All the events happen as if the subjects are mocked, giving them the impression that eventually, nothing has meaning, nothing ever existed, neither the world nor life nor family nor profession and that all is but illusion, hence the feeling of a meaningless experience.

1.2.3 Inverted Experiences

In this category, the NDE takes place like a positive experience, but it is perceived negatively by the subjects. The same light mentioned above will be perceived as aggressive so much so that it

is not the subjects who move towards the light but rather, it is the light that moves towards them to take possession of them. This light is described as white, milky and more or less disgusting. The feeling of dissolving in this light by the subjects is perceived in a dramatic way which entails a great fear of disappearing in an infinite space.

We must note that the events mentioned in the testimony of the subjects experiencing the NDEs are quite current and repetitive. Such NDEs are so universal in nature that similar accounts have been registered in all countries.

Many editors [16] have published the accounts by those who experienced clinical or temporary death. The fact of raising the issue embodies a kind of open-mindedness which salvages our contemporary way of life as rooted in materialist thought.

Nowadays, there is agreement that the human being is a spirit incarnate in a body and that at death, the spirit continues to live. It is equally agreed that the soul or spirit may live on without its body but that a body cannot live without its soul. Many witnesses assert that during an NDE, they saw a kind of vapor escaping from the skull of the patient. The people who lived an NDE are quite numerous and the time has come when we should analyze this phenomenon rationally. Indeed, materialist thinking becomes obsolete when faced with those testimonies since now, we have scientific proof that our life proceeds without our body [9].

Those best informed skeptics with a closed mind now admit that they can no longer deny the existence of NDEs but rather, the discussion revolves around their significance.

Dr Moody was a pioneer in this domain though he started his investigation as a skeptic. His first book entitled “Life after Life” which was published in 1975 is considered to be the classic work that paved the way for modern research in this domain [16]. Since 1975 numerous studies were conducted in many countries. Let us particularly quote the works by K. Ring [19], M. Sabom [20], M. Morse [15] and the Australian Ch. Sutherlands [22] published in 1992 including a selected bibliography of more than 150 case-studies.

The studies have concerned persons who were brought back to life after a state of clinical death (stopped heart or flat encephalogram).

2. THE MAIN STAGES OF THE EXPERIENCE ON THE BRINK OF DEATH

The publication of Raymond Moody’s “Life after Life” in 1975 raised great concern the world over. Having collected several testimonies by patients who died clinically and came back to life, Raymond Moody proceeded to relate in detail the way the NDEs took place for the first time. Dr Moody discovered a striking similarity between the testimonies of 150 patients who lived such experiences. He was able to identify several different items recurring in the reports and he designed a typical model covering all the factors.

2.1 A Typical NDE Scenario

A given person is declared dead when s/he reaches the point of a great physical distress and hears her/his doctor confirming the patient's death. S/he starts to hear a disturbing noise, a loud ringing or a siren after which s/he realizes that s/he is outside the physical body but still in the immediate surroundings and perceives her/his own body from a certain distance as a spectator. S/he is given to observe the efforts to resuscitate the body in a disturbing emotional state. Soon, s/he regains control and starts to adapt to this strange situation. S/he notices that s/he still has a "body", but of quite a different nature with powers that differ greatly from those of the body left behind.

Following this, the patient starts a journey along a dark tunnel and dead relatives come to meet him or her, to guide and help. The spirits of dead relatives and friends are also perceived and more particularly, a loving and warm spirit who was never met previously is then perceived. It is -a being of light- who asks a non verbal question about the evaluation of the patient's entire life, helping in this evaluation by displaying an instantaneous panoramic view of the major events of her/his existence. In a way, s/he feels that s/he is approaching a kind of barrier apparently representing the border between life and death. However, s/he feels the need to return to earth because the instant of death has not yet come and hence, s/he will resist the return to earth since s/he is in the throes of afterlife. Submerged by intense feelings of joy, love and peace s/he will join the physical body and live again in spite of it all.

Upon her/his return to earth, s/he will find it very difficult to tell about this experience for two reasons. On the one hand, no adequate human terms can be found to describe the experience in the netherworld and on the other, s/he would feel annoyed to tell about it for fear of ridicule. However, this experience will affect the behavior deeply, especially regarding the conception of death and its relation with life [16].

It must be noted that statistically, Moody's model of a typical experience represented the persons who lived positive experiences only. Indeed, witnesses of negative experiences are quite rare for the reasons we mentioned in §1.2.

The researchers who focused on this phenomenon unveiled a certain number of essential traits or common denominators shared by numerous experiences at the brink of death. It must be emphasized that the resulting statistics based on the variables of age, sex, race, profession, educational level and religion have no incidence on the number of NDEs and none on their content. At times, the visions reported by certain patients show that those factors contradict their religious convictions.

2.2 Testimonies and Account of the Main Feature of an NDE

In what follows, we present the testimonies of a few people who lived an NDE out of which eleven main traits were made out. Since the testimonies are coherent and repetitive, we shall limit ourselves to no more than two testimonies for each case. The essential traits of these NDEs include several stages.

• **Hearing the Announcement of Death**

The first stage mentioned by R. Moody is what he termed “*hearing the verdict*”, meaning that the patient in a state of clinical death is given to hear and see perfectly the doctors announce the verdict of death though it is in principle impossible for him to feel anything.

Dr Sabom cites the case of a lady who was in the throes of death following an internal hemorrhage two weeks after the birth of her first child:

In the emergency room, I felt I was leaving and said good bye. I had the impression that I was sliding away and I could hear them say that I was in a state of shock. I heard a nurse say that she could no longer feel my pulse, that I did not breathe and that I had passed away. Then, another nurse ordered to put me under intensive care. [20]

• **Peace and Well-being**

The second stage consists of a feeling of perfect calm accompanied by an end to suffering marked by lightness, total relaxation and well-being. According to K. Ring, 60% of the interviewed lived this stage of the experience and 71% of them literally used the terms ‘*peaceful*’ and ‘*calm*’ to describe the emotional aspect of their experience [19]. Moody for his part cited several excerpts from this kind of testimonials [16].

One lady said that following a heart attack:

I began to feel wonderful, experiencing nothing other than peace, comfort, well-being and calm. I had the impression that all my troubles had ceased, thinking that everything was sweet, peaceful with no pain anywhere.

• **Hearing Sound Phenomena**

During the third stage, Moody asserts that some patients claimed to have heard an annoying sound going from “*a rather painful roar*” to “*a strong ringing*” and to “*an acute humming sound*” and “*a thundering noise*” before entering the dark zone (fifth stage). However, we must note that a large majority of patients only remember a feeling of complete silence.

• **Disembodiment (separation of the soul from the body)**

The fourth stage is the disembodiment experience with a modified sensory perception and a different awareness of time and space. In this respect, Moody cites two particularly interesting cases [16]. First, there is the account by a young man who reported that:

passers-by were coming to the site of the accident from different directions, and I observed them from the middle of the pavement which was rather narrow. Nevertheless, as they approached, they did not seem to notice me and continued to walk straight ahead. When they came close nearby, I wanted to move away to let them pass, but they walked through me.

A second account showed that *the intellectual and sensory perceptions were modified and became hyper-developed*:

Our mind becomes marvelously clear. My thinking took note of everything and solved all the problems as it never happened before, without having to go over the same ideas more than once.» Further, one lady reported that : « when she wished to see a far away person, it was as if a searching head inside of me hurled me towards that person. I had the feeling then that if anything happened anywhere in the world, I could easily attend it.

• **Entering a Dark Tunnel**

In the course of the fifth stage, one enters a dark zone with a feeling of peace. This zone is often compared with a tunnel, a narrow valley, a barrel or a cave... Here are two testimonies selected from those presented by Moody [16].

- the case of a man who fell unconscious following a serious illness who reported:

I found myself in empty space and in complete darkness. It is difficult to explain, but I had the feeling of sinking in that dark emptiness. However, I was fully conscious and it was as if I had been immersed in an airless cylinder, in a limbo: I was here and elsewhere at the same time.

- the case of a lady who neared death, following a traffic accident:

I felt absolute peacefulness and I found myself in a tunnel made of concentric circles....

• **Meeting Guides or Departed Persons (relatives or deceased friends)**

These characters attributed the role of guides or counsels will show up. They are close deceased people: relatives or friends, old neighbors, acquaintances or even unknowns who communicate by telepathy, thought exchanges or instant emotions. Moody reports the testimony by a man who was welcomed in the hereafter by a friend who had died recently before him:

As soon as I had left my body, I had the vivid feeling that Bob stood nearby... He was there, but without his earthly body. The latter was more of a translucent entity, giving the impression that he had all his limbs, arms and legs, but I cannot say I was seeing him in a physical way.

• **Meeting a Being of Light**

A common event is the meeting with a shining light. This light is shapeless and cannot be perceived as a being often represented according to the patient's faith as *Jesus, Buddha, Krishna*, etc... This being will cause the panoramic view of the newcomer's elapsed life to appear.

• **Panoramic View**

The eighth stage is extremely curious in that the deceased person is given a panoramic view of her/his entire life and s/he judges all her/his deeds. Moody gives the example of a young woman who gave a very detailed account of her experience. According to her, it was the presence emanating from the magnificent light (stage 8) which coached her into judging her own life and to review all the events that characterized it. She saw herself as a child, breaking a toy that she liked, then as an adolescent in high school. The review is chronological in nature, with certain

aspects emphasized by the luminous presence ever at the side of the young woman. The importance of love and knowledge are clearly made out by the being of light:

I was there and I could really see all those events and everything took place rapidly, giving me nonetheless enough time not to miss any of them. However, this did not take much time overall, at least that was the feeling I had. First there was the light, the review of the past and then the return to the light. I gather that it all took no longer than five minutes, probably more than thirty seconds, but I really cannot say any more.

Generally speaking, after the review of the past, there is the return to the being of light for self-evaluation.

• **The Barrier of Light**

At a given time, the patient encounters a luminous barrier resembling a door or even a wall, a kind of border or boundary and s/he has a strong urge to return to the earthly body. We find in [25] the following testimony:

Jean identified his last journey as surrounded by different elements: the looming of a barrier that he was forbidden to transgress... he tried to reach it with his hand in vain; the presence of ancestors or parents: his grandmother, died when he was twelve and his father died when he was seventeen. He had the feeling that they looked at him judgingly, but could not say anymore as there was no dialogue.

A lady interviewed by Moody declared that she found herself amid a marvelous scenery, a meadow of an intense luminous green and then, she reached a fence which she could not cross despite all her attempts. [16]

• **Reintegration of the Body**

The tenth stage gives an account of the return to life of the patients by reintegrating their body. The process is often instantaneous and violent. One man asserted:

I was up there near the ceiling and I could see them trying to resuscitate me. When the electrodes were placed on my chest and my body jerked up, I fell like a dead weight and soon, I had reentered my body.

A lady asserted:

I had the feeling of being recalled, as if drawn by a magnet.

This return is often realized against the will of the patients who had felt so good in their new state that they no longer wished to come back to life... [16].

• **Incommunicability**

Each person who experienced an NDE finds it difficult to express it via the habitual language and the same goes for its emotional components. More particularly, Dr Moody cited the testimony of a young woman who tried to analyze the reasons for this incommunicability:

You see, it is hard for me to explain that because all the words I use apply to three dimensions. During my experience, I could not stop thinking that : 'My geometry classes had taught me that there were only three dimensions which I took for granted, but that was a mistake as there are more dimensions'. Indeed, the world we live in is three-dimensional, but the other world is not like that at all. This is why I am at pains to explain it. I am forced to use three dimensional words and to stick to reality, but that is not the way. [16]

In the following section, we shall attempt to analyze the different states of an NDE to deduce the pertinent information.

3. ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FACTS OBSERVED DURING AN NDE

3.1 Failure of the Materialist Explanation

To this day, NDEs represent something new to science. Psychiatrists, neurologists and cardiologists searched for physiological causes and even tried to reproduce an NDE in laboratory via electric excitation of the brain, in vain. Other rationalists tried to explain the content of an NDE (hence the disembodiment experience) through the elaboration of “*phantasmagoric scenarios*”. However, this type of simplistic and reductionist explanation was strictly negated from the very start by the early studies conducted by the pioneers on NDEs such as R. Moody, K. Ring, M. Sabom etc... All of these authors demonstrated that the mere psychological explanations (disembodiment experience, phantasms, dreams, simple hallucinations etc...) were incapable of explaining the sequence of visions proper to the NDEs. One argument among others is that the phantasms are known to vary from one individual to the next whereas the content of NDEs' testimonials shows remarkable similitude, whatever the culture, the age, the religion or the way of life of those telling about this experience.

The disembodiment phenomenon cannot be a hallucination since there were blind subjects who were able to depict the doctors' actions in a very precise manner. One could then safely deduce that these patients did in fact observe their own carnal self from outside as they claimed. There were also those who left their body, moved about the intensive care room and were even able to read the stickers on the ceiling fans. They were even able to reproduce conversations which took place in adjoining rooms and beyond, in their integrality [9].

It is finally obvious that the materialistic image of the body and of the brain as the producer of thought has become obsolete. Indeed, a new conception of the body and soul is emerging. This conception which is spiritual and scientific at the same time maintains that a human being also incorporates an abstract entity which remains the seat of consciousness after death. Eradicating the spiritual component underlying the NDEs is thus bound for failure.

Flowing from the above considerations, there are certain aspects which deserve our attention.

- If one day we were able to transplant a brain on another patient, the transplant will absolutely have no effect either on the personality or the behavior of the subject. Indeed, in the disembodiment state of the NDE, **handicapped persons asserted that they had regained their physical integrity and their normal functional capabilities (no incapacitation was present)**.
- The human shape remains as it was after the disembodiment experience (to wit the perception and recognition of deceased relatives by the NDE witnesses).
- Our conscience may access levels of reality other than that of the ordinary physical one.
- The soul does have a material constitution made of a subtle substance. Some intensive care specialists reported having «*felt and observed smoke, vapor or other ‘entities’ leaving the body of those leaving us.*» [9]
- This subtle material substance constituting the soul is made of matter very different from what we know since everything demonstrates that its specificities belong to another space-time.

Regarding this issue, some researchers postulated that the soul (our double so to speak) which is immortal and indivisible is constituted by particles resembling the neutrinos a great deal. Their argument was that certain patients who came to, had been able to go through solid objects (walls, glass, etc...). Other more daring researchers have even tried to establish a model for the soul in order to explain the phenomena characterizing the NDEs. We shall particularly cite the model attempted by R. Dutheil [11].

3.2 Towards a Model for Conscience

In Quantum Mechanics, it has been shown that if an elementary particle is split into two half-particles, the latter move away from each other at the speed of light. Further, when the spin direction of one part is modified, the spin of the other part would also be modified in the same manner. In other words, the two particles will communicate the position to each other instantaneously thanks to information traveling at a speed superior to the speed of light. Thus, matter is not totally deprived of consciousness which led R. Dutheil to elaborate a model attesting to the complexity of our world and to hypothesize the existence of a second complementary and symmetrical universe (parallel to ours) where speeds are always superior to the speed of light.

In that universe, our notion of time no longer applies since one can travel instantaneously in the past, the present and the future. This universe which he called “*super luminous time-space*” is composed only of information. It is, among other things the universe of the soul and the spirit and it can be defined as composed of ‘*tachyonic*’ (or super luminous) particles.

From this vantage point, the brain would not be the producer of thought but rather a kind of interface allowing the latter to act in the inferior luminous world. The world we perceive would then only be a holographic projection of the super luminous world.

Flowing from this model, the author provides an explanation for numerous phenomena which have irritated thinkers a great deal, such as the NDEs, prediction, survival after death and the like. According to the author :

- Death consists in the transfer of the soul to the super luminous space time. It would then be logical that sensations emanating from another time-space dimension be incommunicable since our language is not adapted for it.
- The actual seat for sensations is located in the super luminous space. Such organs as the eyes and ears are but the receptors of sensations without being their seat or origin. Then, there is no reason why an “unconscious” patient -according to our under luminous criteria- whose organs have stopped functioning, can still perceive sensations.
- Life rarely provides us with fully pleasing sensations because its daily emotional content is rather negative, characterized by stress, anguish, anger... At the moment of death, our soul is ridden of all the influences associated with the under luminous world. New sensations emanating from the super luminous world -that of total consciousness, order and information in its pure state- reach the subject. They can only be positive and pleasant, hence the feeling of well-being.
- The sound effects reported by some rare patients may be explained by the fact that when a subject is placed in a sound-proof room sometimes believes he is hearing loud noises while they really do not exist.
- The journey through the dark zone (*tunnel*) represents the transfer of the soul from the under luminous time-space to the super luminous time-space and this move indicates the crossing of the light barrier. The soul is then impregnated with luminous particles, becoming luminous itself, and thus, it will perceive the outside only as dark.
- The disembodiment experience is nothing more than the return of the soul to the luminous time-space dimension i.e. to the universe of total information.
- Following the disembodiment experience, the deceased person has the feeling of being “*pure spirit*”. However, s/he is still attached to sub-luminous world by several links. Therefore, s/he has the need to create an environment in keeping with what he was familiar with in earthly life : marvelous scenery, meadows, rivers etc...

Although the attempt by Professor Dutheil seems laudable, it is still characterized by several shortcomings.

3.3 Criticisms of the Model

The criticisms touch upon several essential points :

R. Dutheil considers that during an NDE, “*the partial sub-luminous soul attempts to penetrate the super-luminous universe in order to melt within the total soul*” [11].

We deal here then with two souls, one embedded in the carnal envelope and the second in the super-luminous space. He claims that all our deeds are dictated by the super-luminous soul and hence that all illnesses (particularly mental illnesses) are “*all illnesses of information processing. The patient no longer manages the information correctly or perceives disturbed information in the same way as a TV set displays unclear or distorted pictures*”.

- We do not agree with R. Dutheil’s opinion that postulates two souls, one in the super-luminous dimension (total soul) and the other in our body (sub-luminous soul), one dictating it over the other. In our opinion, there is only one soul but it is doubled (cf. section 4.4.4.1) and it is the one which is embedded in our body. Information and instructions emanating from our soul are received by the brain which executes them. If the brain suffers from a neurological, biological or other defect, then the illness will appear since, as we established it earlier the brain is but a mere interface between the soul and the rest of the body.

Further, Dutheil’s model does not explain the phenomena observed in the course of a negative NDE for the following reasons:

- In a “*meaningless*” NDE, the subject is within the vacuum, in absolute nothingness, perceiving no light, although the space he reaches is supposed to be that of light.
- The model presented by Dutheil hypothesizes that the will of the deceased creates its own environment after death: everything that is observed can be created instantly in no time, but it can also be annulled likewise. In a positive experience, it is only natural that the deceased person enjoys the beautiful scenery encountered and that he would in no way delete that environment. In the case of an infernal NDE, the witnesses were not capable of ridding themselves of their horrible environment. [18]
- In the case of a reverse NDE, the soul of the deceased has the feeling of regressing in the bottom of the tunnel whereas s/he is normally supposed to progress in the super-luminous universe in order to melt into total soul. The light which is supposed to be pleasant is rather milky white and disgusting.
- The tunnel which is described as a dark zone is seen as the consequence of the crossing of the light barrier by the soul while this barrier is hypothetical very much like the sound barrier.
- The model has no explanation for the meaning of the panoramic vision of the patient’s life who judges his own deeds.

We must note that if the resuscitation is not accomplished within a short time, at least within the three first minutes, the patient will go from clinical death to biological death and the return to life will no longer be possible. Since the resuscitation time varies from one patient to the next, not all people can access all the stages of an NDE. We shall therefore consider -in our study- only those persons who underwent the most advanced stages of the experience on the brink of death.

3.4 Analyses & Interpretations

In order to make out pertinent information derived from the frontiers of death, we feel that it would be convenient to distinguish the stages characterizing the experience into two categories: the stages before entering the tunnel and those occurring after crossing it.

3.4.1 Stages Preceding the Entering of the Tunnel

The statistics show that in these first stages:

- 100% of the witnesses were able to report and describe exactly all the details of their resuscitation, sometimes repeating the words uttered at that time by the doctors and nurses, while they were not supposed to hear anything since they were entirely unconscious.
- All the witnesses without exception declared that they underwent a modification of their intellectual and sensory faculties which became hyper-developed.
- Their human nature (reason, memory, emotions etc...) is preserved to a point that they never realize that they died.

3.4.2 Stages Following the Crossing of the Tunnel

According to the gathered accounts, all of the questioned witnesses without exception reported about :

- Their failure to describe their experience after crossing the tunnel, correctly: that is the “*incommunicability*”,
- A sensation of peace and well-being or of horror depending on whether the experience was positive or negative.

Among those who survived the most advanced stages of an NDE, there is agreement on :

- An encounter with guides or close deceased persons,
- An encounter with a Being of Light who displays a panoramic view of the past life and who coaches the newcomer into evaluating his terrestrial life,

- The existence of a barrier which stops the patient, a kind of ultimate barrier between life and death.

Regarding the latter point, it is possible to postulate the existence of three universes and not only one:

- our material and perceptible universe,
- transient universe (apprehended by those who have experienced an NDE),
- the universe of the soul (that of the hereafter).

Indeed, the subjects who were declared dead by their doctors have all reported that after journeying through the tunnel, they had found that they were in a world different from ours (transient universe) then they were stopped by the barrier. In this intermediary world, there are two possibilities, either to return to life (reintegrating one's body) or dying (crossing the barrier). This world then plays the role of an interface between our own material world and the hereafter ensuring the passage of the soul before its integration to this world...the world of death. Each of these three universes has its own specific space time.

3.4.2.1 Interpreting Incommunicability

In our opinion, the journey through the tunnel achieved by the deceased consists in a transition from our three-dimension space towards the transient universe which certainly possesses space time attributes different from that of our.

It is known that in the practice of multidimensional data analysis in Applied Mathematics, if we want to express a data belonging to a large dimension space into a lower dimension one, there will be in general a loss of information due to the transition between the two spaces.

Let us consider for instance a cloud of n points in a three-dimension space where each point is defined by the usual three coordinates. The structure of this cloud can be easily described in our space. Let us assume that we want to give to a bi-dimensional being a detailed description of what we observe. In order to reach this goal, we have to project the cloud on his proper space (i.e. the plane). This projection will consequently lead in general to a distortion or an information loss. This latter corresponds, for a given couple of points to either a relative increase or decrease of the distance between them.

Therefore, transferring information from a multi-dimensional space to a three-dimensional one via a projection will always lead to some distortion. This will be the same when we move from a three-dimensional space to a bi-dimensional one as shown above.

Note: However, we may encounter a minimal or even no distortion in very particular cases and under some conditions (especially depending on the shape of the projection and its direction) hence the preservation of the information.

It would then be only normal in the case of an NDE that the witnesses' sensations emanating from another time-space be incommunicable because our language itself is made of sensations

based on a three-dimensional image of our reality. This incommunicability is then not the fruit of any fraud or lies, but it rather constitutes the proof of the patients' sincerity who are the first to be stupefied by their experience. Indeed, they are unable to explain their sensations with our three-dimensional logic nor can they describe their sensations since our language is not applicable.

A first deduction transpires from our analysis, namely *the transient universe equates a multi-dimensional space*.

Some survivors reported their encounter with close deceased persons even before ascending the tunnel. In other words, the encounter took place in our three-dimensional space. Thus we can deduce *that our space or universe is reachable by the deceased and that it is entangled within the transient universe*.

Furthermore, the survivors who lived the panoramic stage reported that they viewed all the details of their life. Obviously, this process cannot last a few seconds or even minutes. We may thus deduce that *we deal here with a time quite different from the usual physical one*. On one hand, this conclusion may be supported by the fact that witnesses asserted that they felt their experience lasted an eternity. On the other hand, the space in question has certainly a geometry different from our. In addition, it is admitted that it is the geometry of each space that defines its proper time. So time does not flow the same way when we move from one universe to another.

We are thus led to this conclusion : *the transient universe as a multidimensional space is entangled in our proper universe. In the former, the time flow is quite different from the flow of our usual time. Therefore, in this context, the tunnel appears as a hidden dimension common to the two spaces, that achieves a kind of interconnection*.

The third universe, (that of the soul) for its part, *is impossible to apprehend because biological death is irreversible. However, we are certain it is multidimensional but the present data do not allow us to draw any conclusion regarding its time-space specificities which are radically different from those we know*. We shall examine one of its specificities in section 4, by focusing on matters other than the observations reported by witnesses.

3.4.2.2 Interpreting the Sensation of Peace or of horror

Several researchers who wanted to explain the sensation of peace or horror during an NDE focused on purely psychological considerations : « at the moment of death, the soul rids itself of stress progressively » hence the feeling of peace and well-being in the case of a positive NDE or « an increase of the degree of fear of what will happen » in a negative NDE. To our mind, if we set aside any spiritual dimension from our deeds, we will not be able to explain why there are positive experiences in certain cases and negative ones in others. Indeed, all experiences should logically take place identically.

3.4.2.3 Explaining the Being of Light and of the Panoramic Vision of Life

In all the testimonies, the controversy is centered around the identity of the Being of Light which is interpreted according to the religious beliefs of the subject as an angel, a prophet: Jesus,

Buddha or Krishna etc... We shall in this respect review the case Alexa's experience with an NDE (1973) excerpted from the witness data base of the Near Death Experience Research Foundation : NDERF [32].

The review of my life has started. Absolutely everything I thought, did, said, hated, whether I helped or not was displayed much like on a home cinema. The extent to which I had been cruel to people, how I could have helped them, how I had been wicked with animals ...[...] I fell face down with shame. I was given to see how the consequences of my actions to help or their lack had affected the others and their life. It was only then that I realized that every small decision or choice touches the whole world. The feeling that I failed the Savior was only but real. Astonishingly, despite the horror I was in, I felt the compassion and the acceptance of my limitations by the Savior and the others.

In the course of this review, the evil being was present. [...] Each time I made a mistake or missed something, this pleased him a great deal and he shouted : 'There! Do you see how she failed? Why didn't she do better or help better? Should she not be punished?' I was devastated. My few small good actions could not satisfy God's perfect norms. I did deserve all that I reaped. When it was all over, a voice roared : 'Is she covered by the lamb's blood?' Answer : 'yes!!!'

Once the Court had disappeared, the evil being, Satan screamed, whistled, shrank and 'Pouf' disappeared. Everything vanished except for Jesus Christ who gazed at me with incredible love!

According to this account, we may unambiguously understand that Alexa is not a practicing Christian (« *the feeling that I had let my Savior down was only but real* »). Nonetheless, she was convinced to be in the presence of Jesus « *who gazed at her with an incredible love*». But one must ask how the evil being can appear side by side with whom she considered to be '*the Son of God*'. He is even introduced as his equal in condemning Alexa's sins. Would this lady have badly reported her experience or falsified it? This holds little truth because there are other accounts which corroborate this by asserting the encounter with Jesus.

This testimony which seems to be inconsistent is quite normal since the events took place in a multidimensional universe (after crossing the tunnel). As soon as the soul reintegrates the body, a transition is operated towards our three-dimensional universe. Therefore, the information which will be explored in the first universe will be entirely distorted for the reasons mentioned above.

We must note that in an NDE, the panoramic stage must take place in a standardized manner for all subjects and there is no reason why the Being of Light should vary in accordance with the beliefs of the individual who is dead clinically. The Being of light will then certainly be neither Jesus, nor Buddha nor Krishna... We shall reveal the identity of this Being in section 4.

3.5 Rethinking Death

According to our analysis, we may safely assert that death is only a simple transition towards a different plane which exists elsewhere, i.e. an existence displacement. Indeed, why should the presence of the physical body or its absence matter if we continue to live on without losing our senses or our identity?

In an interview, Dr Moody declared:

Whenever any survivor was asked about her/his opinion on her/his NDE, the answer would be unequivocal that true life was in the hereafter and that life on Earth was but a dream when compared with it.

The accounts by the persons who lived an NDE are rather disturbing and even destabilizing for the adepts of some religions, hence the need to confront the Holy Scriptures, leaving it to the discretion of the reader to judge what is pertinent and what is not.

(Continued on Part II)