

## Preface

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Years ago I asked myself whether near-death experiences were proof of a life after death. So I searched for explanations for these experiences, as well as proofs of the apparent reality revealed by these experiences. But none of the books or scientific articles I read, none of the radio or television programs I heard or saw, and no-one with whom I spoke could give me adequate explanations for these experiences, or proofs of the reality revealed by these experiences. This dearth of adequate explanations and proof stimulated me to embark upon my own study of near-death experiences. An initial survey revealed a vast literature about near-death experiences, and much good scientific research in matters relating to these experiences. The sheer quantity of this literature, as well as the quantity and quality of experimental studies relating to all aspects of near-death experiences, meant that any personal research and experimentation would be no more than a hasty repetition of existing studies. So I decided to limit my investigation of near-death experiences to an extensive literature study. During the years I studied near-death experiences, I learned how changes in the functioning of the body generate these experiences. Simultaneously with other researchers, I learned how these changes in the functioning of the body revealed a physiological basis underlying many religious beliefs, as well as revealing the nature of death. Gradually this book evolved into a personal investigation into the personal experience and meaning of death. The final result is a curious mixture of religion, the paranormal, and hard facts about the functioning of the body. The sequence of chapters explaining all these things may seem strange, but is actually carefully worked out to provide a logical flow of argument answering my questions about the nature of death.

- 1 Chapter 1 ('Questions') asks three questions about the nature of death. What is death? What will I experience as I die? Is there a life after death? It also explains my reasons for wanting to know answers to these questions.
- 2 Chapter 2 ('Death of the Body') carefully defines death of the body. This is necessary, because ideas about the definition of death of the body differ considerably between people and societies.
- 3 Chapter 3 ('Separate Body, Mind & Soul') describes how our ancestors possibly came upon the idea of a difference between the mind and the body, the concept of the soul, as well as the belief in a life after death.
- 4 Chapter 4 ('The Soul') uses the texts of major world religions to define the three fundamental properties of the soul manifested by the body. These are: the soul interacts with the body, the soul interacts with the body to animate the body, and the soul interacts with the body to control the body.

- 5 Chapter 5 ('Animation by the Soul'), and Chapter 6 ('Control by the Soul'), discuss the proofs that a soul with these properties really exists.
- 6 Chapter 7 ('Paranormal Senses'), Chapter 8 ('Dreams & Visions'), and Chapter 9 ('The Aura'), discuss whether apparently immaterial senses and aspects of the body are indirect evidence for the reality of a soul.
- 7 Out-of-body experiences provide the most direct evidence for the reality of an invisible and immaterial human soul. Chapter 10 ('Disembodiment Defined') defines the properties of apparently disembodied souls.
- 8 The properties of the out-of-body experiences defined in Chapter 10 necessitated a rigorous discussion of the way the mind perceives sensations. So Chapter 11 ('Sensation, Body, & Mind') discusses how the mind perceives sensations.
- 9 The discussions in chapters 10 and 11 enabled an accurate discussion of out-of-body experiences in Chapter 12 ('Disembodied Feelings'), and nocturnal demonic attack in Chapter 13 ('Diabolical Dreams').
- 10 Chapter 14 ('Body, Mind & Soul') summarises all the evidence for an invisible and immaterial aspect of the body that survives the death of the body, such as the mind, or the soul. The conclusion is that there is no soul, that the mind is a product of the functioning of the mechanisms of the body, and that the mind dies with the body.
- 11 The discussions in the preceding chapters answered my questions about the nature of death, and the possibility of a life after death. However the question of how I will feel while dying remained unanswered. In order to learn about the experience of dying, it is first necessary to define the nature of dying, and why people die. Chapter 15 ('Dying') discusses and defines these aspects of dying. The discussion in this chapter reveals that more than nine in ten people lose consciousness, and die of disorders causing loss of consciousness and death due to oxygen starvation, while less than one in ten people lose consciousness and die of other causes.
- 12 Oxygen starvation determines the final dying experiences of more than nine in ten people, so Chapter 16 ('Oxygen Starvation') is a discussion of the experiences generated by different degrees of oxygen starvation.
- 13 Chapter 17 ('Dying Eyes') discusses the causes of the visual experiences reported by dying people.
- 14 All this knowledge about the experience of dying is combined in Chapter 18 ('The Experience of Dying') to provide a description of the process of dying, and the experiences that people may undergo while dying. This answered my question about the experiences undergone by the dying.
- 15 Chapter 19 ('A Vision of Eternity') is a personal reflection upon the philosophical problems raised by the knowledge revealed within this book.

Many references are made to scientific journals reporting the results of experiments whose data are used to support arguments in the text. I give these references so interested people with access to this information can determine the accuracy of my reasoning for themselves. This is standard practice in all scientific literature. After all, some people may claim that what I say cannot be true. Very well, these people can check these experimental reports for themselves to see if they arrive at other conclusions. Some people may say some of the experiments reported in this book are immoral and unethical. I can only say to these people that these experiments were all performed with consenting adult volunteers according to ethical standards current at the time, as well as conforming to ethical standards set by the reputable international scientific journals publishing these experimental results at that time.

Some people may say that some of what I have written in this book is not new. They are correct. But this book explains and uses this knowledge in new ways. Some people may even say some things in this book are self-evident. Indeed, some things are self-evident. Some things are even so self-evident, that some people say they need no explanation at all. Yet, even though some things are obvious and self-evident when explained, for some reason they were neither obvious nor self-evident before I devised these explanations. Furthermore, I can only say that I have never seen or heard many of these things explained this way before, either by other people, or on the television, or on the radio. I am widely read, yet I have never come across many of these explanations before.

A large part of this book is devoted to an investigation of the reality of a human soul. But this book is not about the human soul as such. An extensive discussion of the human soul was necessitated by the fact that all current thinking about the possibility of a life after death involves some sort of belief in a soul. In fact, at the time of writing, most people still believe that each person has a soul, and all current societies are heirs to millennia of intense communal belief in the reality of the human soul. So any discussion of the mortality of the human mind had to discuss the many apparent evidences for the reality of a soul.

Another important point was made evident to me by people who read early versions of this book. Different people had different ideas about the meanings of fundamental terms such as 'life', 'soul', 'mind', 'dying', and 'death'. So I have taken great pains to carefully define these terms, and these definitions are used consistently throughout this book.

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