

Compelling Evidences for Life after Death and Counter Explanations wherever Possible

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ABSTRACT

“Death” is a word which leaves cold shivers in all of us. The word is feared and one does not like it to be talked about. Ignorance breeds fear and hence fear manifests because of ignorance about the death phenomenon. Though we all know that it is universal yet we tend to think that it is for others and not for us. We attend funerals and become philosophical and then only we get a thought that one day we also will meet this eventuality. Soon after attending a funeral, the thought gets brushed away and we continue life as if we are immortal.

Keywords: *Compelling Evidences, Life after Death, Counter Explanations*

What is ‘Death’? Is it the end of a person? What has ended? Is it a process? Is it a state of consciousness (or shall I say "unconsciousness")? What is it? Each one of life species meets "death" but no one knows what happens when we die because when we die, we cannot come back and tell what is an afterlife because the ticket is one way!

In normal parlance, death is said to occur when the body does not respond to external stimuli and breathing and heartbeat stop. As per the Oxford Dictionary, Death is the end of life; the state of being dead; the end of something and 'dead' means- no longer alive. The meanings are very vague and do not enlighten us on what is death.

Death is defined more elaborately in textbook of forensic medicine.

Vij Krishan¹ in his Textbook of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology finds a meaningful definition of death-“Black’s Law Dictionary defines *death* as, ‘The cessation of life; the ceasing to exist defined by the physicians as a total stoppage of circulation of the blood and a cessation of animal and vital functions consequent thereupon, such as respiration, pulsation, etc.’ Here, the emphasis was placed on the cessation of respiration and circulatory function, but it was obvious that all systems would fail quickly after any of the vital functions had failed, viz., the nervous system, circulatory system, and respiratory system. That is why these are known as Atria Mortis, *death’s portals of entry*.”

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Generally, death is supposed to occur when breathing stops but my exploration of the literature on death² brought forth the following meanings about death:

“The above *concept of death* lingered on for centuries until recent times when medical-care advances have made it possible to maintain respiration and circulation for long periods through heart–lung machines. Hence, there appeared the development of the concept of 'brain death.’

The definition of brain death was put forth by an Ad Hoc Committee of Harvard Medical School in 1968. The Committee was composed of 13 members— ten were doctors representing various disciplines of medical science and three were non-doctors, i.e., a lawyer, a theologian, and a historian of science. It recommended three criteria for determining permanent non-function of the brain:

- 1) Unreceptivity and unresponsivity
- 2) No movements or breathing
- 3) No reflexes

The criteria of the Harvard Ad Hoc Committee have since been generally accepted throughout the world. Currently, the brain-stem has been the focus of attention where vital centres are situated because various strata of the brain behave differently in their response to oxygen deprivation. Therefore, circumstances may be there, where the cortex has been damaged but the lower brain including the brain- stem is still functioning. In such a state, the victim will exist in a ‘vegetative state’, *the so-called ‘living cadaver’*. The victim can remain in a deep coma for a considerable period; maybe for years. However, when brain death spreads below the tentorium, i.e., when the base of the brain including the midbrain, pons, and medulla suffer damage, the loss of vital centres and consciousness will cause the victim not only to be irreversibly comatose but also to be incapable of spontaneous breathing. Without medical intervention, the cardiac arrest invariably follows within minutes, and then the usual process of ‘cellular death’ progresses.

This is the stage of brain-stem death.

Indian Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994 (the Act was enacted in July 1994, and notification was issued in the Gazette of India on 4th February 1995) has also given statutory sanction to the concept of brain-stem death. The Act defines a ‘deceased person’ as one in whom permanent disappearance of all evidence of life has occurred because of brain-stem death or in the cardio-pulmonary sense, at any time after the live birth. Brain-stem death has been defined as the stage at which all the functions of the brain-stem have permanently and irreversibly ceased. *The brain- stem death needs to be certified by a board of doctors consisting of the following:*

- The registered medical practitioner in charge of the hospital in which brain-stem death has occurred.
- An independent registered medical practitioner is a specialist to be nominated by a registered medical practitioner specified from the panel of names approved by an appropriate authority.
- A neurologist or a neurosurgeon is to be nominated by a registered medical practitioner specified from the panel of names approved by an appropriate authority.

Once irreversible damage to the brain-stem has been established, the victim is dead in the somatic sense, though not yet dead in the cellular sense.

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Two phases of death have been recognized, namely, the extinction of personality or the death of the body as a whole (soma means body) when there is a cessation of vital processes of the body. This is referred to as somatic death (systemic or clinical death), which is followed by progressive disintegration of body tissues and is called cellular or molecular death.

In the absence of circulation and respiration, different cells die their molecular deaths at different times after the somatic death. Death of the brain cells stand first that are most sensitive to oxygen deprivation and therefore usually begin to die within about 5 minutes of somatic death. Then may come to the organs like lungs, liver, kidneys, and heart, which need to be removed for transplantation at the earliest possible, maximally within about an hour. The striped muscles can survive for hours and tissues like hair and nails for days.

These are the stages as described in medical science and it is observed that the above stages of death (as per modern medical sciences) are almost similar (but not identical!) to the Indian religious view which believes that death progresses in stages and eventually reaches a stage of cell deaths.

Besides the above scientific meanings about death, we can also say that death is a stage of life because changes happen to the body at different stages of life – as born infants even though we possess automatic physical systems of breathing, heart beating, digestion and excretion but we lack physical capabilities of walking/running, speaking etc. When we pass on to the next stage we develop the capabilities of speech, thinking, writing, walking, running etc. Changes happen at puberty and at the youth stages, all our physical and mental capabilities attain a peak and then start a gradual decline. We start losing physical capabilities even though mental decline does not keep pace with physical decline. We lose vigour and strength and gradually become so weak that we cannot even walk so motor capabilities are gone when we reach the stage of extreme old age; our sight fails and we become hard of hearing. Thus, the loss of physical capabilities continues but we continue to live. A stage comes when we do not respond to external stimuli—the stage of coma but doctors say that we are still having life and many a time we come back to life and start responding to external stimuli. During the coma, our brains are functional and hence mentally we are alive.

Doctors declare us dead when breathing stops, the heart stops and the brain is dead. Yes, we may not be able to respond to external stimuli and all our bodily capabilities- both automatic (breathing etc.) and physical would have failed us but we could still exist --- in the coma we existed without physical movements and in this state beyond coma we could exist even without automatic physical capability of breathing etc. Maybe our physical capabilities cannot be brought back but it could be that our mental state is still alive -we may be physically dead but still we could be existing. Could it not be an extended stage of life where all physical capabilities including automated systems of breathing etc. have stopped but the person is still alive because the mental state is alive? Were we not alive when in the coma? Could we not be alive as if next stage of life beyond coma where we lose the capability of responding to external stimuli as well as lose automated systems of breathing etc? Maybe this was the next stage of life where only the mind was functioning and since physical actions were not happening, we burnt the body but we still existed with only mental capabilities. So, we may be alive as if in the next stage of life beyond Coma.

Hence, could we not be correct when we say that there is life after death?

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The above is extrapolating the observable facts to deduce logically that we outlive death but there could be more compelling shreds of evidence that life exists even after our body dies. We shall be exploring these compelling shreds of evidence which support the belief that there is life after death. Having examined the compelling shreds of evidence, we shall explore whether these could be logically justified by some other counter-explanations. Let us first examine the compelling pieces of evidence which are before us which go on to prove that there is life after death!

Compelling shreds of evidence to prove that there is life after death

Unlike other phenomena that defy proof to date, the phenomenon of life after death cannot be researched directly. Telepathy (still to be proved) for instance, can be tested directly in a laboratory but research on survival after death cannot be done the same way as you cannot come back and talk about after life. But that does not mean it cannot be researched.

Just think about how our brain researches itself.

Brain research is happening and the impasse, "brain researching brain", is overcome we, now, know some aspects of brain functioning, though, a major portion of the brain still remains unexplored and neuroscientists are busy exploring the unknown portion of the brain.

One approach taken in brain research was to understand what caused some brain patients to do weird things—what changes in their brain triggered their weird actions.

V S Ramachandran³ in his book, "The Tell Tale Brain", takes us on a fascinating journey into the human brain. While studying patients who exhibit bizarre symptoms, he used the learning to understand the functions of the normal brain.

He could explore deviations in the brains of patients compared to normal brains and, thus, give better understanding of human brain. In his own words, "It is difficult to talk about brain without waxing lyrical. But how does one go about actually studying it? There are many methods, ranging from single-neuron studies to high-tech brain scanning to cross-species comparison. I generally see patients who have suffered brain lesions due to stroke, tumor, or head injury and as a result are experiencing disturbances in their perception and consciousness. I also sometimes meet people, who, do not appear brain damaged or impaired, yet, report having wildly unusual perceptual or mental experiences. In either case, the procedure is the same; I interview them, observe their behavior, administer some simple tests, take a peek at their brain and then come up with a hypothesis that bridges psychology and neurology--- in other words, a hypothesis that connects strange behavior to what has gone wrong in the intricate wiring of the brain. A decent percentage of time I am successful. And so, patient by patient, case by case, I gain a stream of fresh insight into how human mind and brain work---and how they are inextricably linked."

Using the above approach, he came up with incredible brain research done to alleviate the sufferings of patients of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS-II) by facilitating the unlearning of "learned pains" through the use of "phantom limbs". He uncovered the mystery behind "Color Synesthesia" when he investigated patients who saw colours when shown digits i.e., the brain linking colour with digits in some people. Also, while studying the brain with respect to pain, he could discover "Mirror Neurons" which get activated with pain in one's body as well as when a person sees another person having pain. As per him, The Mirror Neurons could be used to treat Autism.

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Thus, the impasse of Brain researching itself was circumvented and brain research progressed well and is still marching ahead.

Could we not tow the same line for Survival research?

We should be able to do indirect research and reach compelling pieces of evidence for life after death. We do have unusual instances (like impaired brains as discussed above) when people have had near-death experiences or when they came back to life after being declared dead. We also have out-of-body experiences (OBEs). Such real-life events are similar to brain-dysfunctional events. We may reach compelling shreds of evidence of life after death towing similar lines. Let us start our journey on indirect research: -

Compelling evidences about the existence of life after death through indirect research

The medical sciences hold that a person dies when the brain is dead.

If we were to believe the observations of Anita Slomski⁴, the instances quoted by her could become compelling evidence for life after death because the people declared dead after their brains became dead came back to life and lived happily after. This could mean that they were still alive after dying and could somehow retract back to life. The instances explained by Anita are reproduced below:

Twenty-one-year-old Zack Dunlap from Oklahoma appeared on NBC's Today Show in 2008 to tell an incredible story of hearing a physician telling his parents that a PET scan confirmed that he was brain dead after a catastrophic brain injury. While he was being prepared for organ donation, however, he moved his arm purposely in response to stimuli. Dunlap recovered, went to a rehabilitation hospital, and ultimately went home 48 days later, very much alive.

Earlier this year, 13-year-old Trenton McKinley from Alabama and his parents hit the media circuit to talk about the miracle of Trenton awakening after being declared brain dead from a vehicle accident—1 day before his organs were scheduled to be harvested.



The above compelling instances could become scientific proof of life after death if we could research and find out what were special factors in these instances which made these braindead

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people return to life and using those factors if we could replicate this phenomenon in future patients who just died; this could become landmark evidence of life existing even after death.

The above is not an isolated incidence where people have returned back to life from the threshold of death. There are cases of Experiences which give unflinching evidence that people had left the body while approaching death and re-entered it to become alive. This is possible only if life existed even without the body. And if it is so then life after death is certainly possible.

I narrate some real-life incidences from the available literature and then we shall subject them to a critical analysis.

Near Death Experiences—Indirect proof of life after death

Near Death Experiences (NDEs) are experiences of people nearing death, who pass over to the other side of life and are resuscitated back to life and they vividly remember the happenings after they had died. They could find themselves floating out of the body and could see their dead body and happenings around the body. In some cases, they are reported to have observed happenings in other rooms which were not visible from the place where their bodies were lying. The incidences reported are not works of fiction but are real-life incidences reported from various hospitals.

Peer-reviewed Near Death authentic instances that are posted by Magis Centre⁵ are reproduced below

(Magis Centre is an organization in California USA with a mission to create content that helps people find a higher purpose in life, an awareness of their transcendent dignity, a sense of the transcendent providential power who guides them, and a determination to live ethically responsible lives. To that end, the Magis Center produces and distributes media that provides contemporary commentary on timeless topics.)

Following are five Peer-reviewed authentic NDE instances cited by the Magis Centre

Five Stories of Near-Death Experiences

NDE instance One: Finding Dentures

In a 2001 study by renowned cardiologist Pim van Lommel, a man who had been in a deep coma later told a nurse that he recognized her. He told her that he saw where she had placed his dentures during resuscitation efforts, and then described the cart where she placed them. They were there, precisely as he described it.

NDE instance Two: A Child Meets Relatives

One man who had an NDE as a child recalled the experience of meeting dead relatives: “There were some presences there. There were some ladies... I didn’t know them at the time... They were so loving and so wonderful, and I just didn’t want to come back... I didn’t see any pictures of them until I was an adult, but then I said, ‘Oh, yeah.’... They were my great-grandmothers who had died years before I was born.”

NDE instance Three: Life-Review

Often, people relay their near-death experiences a review of their lives. Though life review experiences cannot be deemed scientifically veridical, they are worth noting. They can have a profound effect on the NDEer and sometimes cause them to re-examine their life and morals. Below is a doctor’s description of the life review of an NDE patient:

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When he realized that collision was imminent, the patient said that time seemed to slow down as he hit his brakes and went into an uncontrolled slide. Then he seemed to pop out of his body. While in this state, he had a life review which consisted of brief pictures—flashes—of his life. His car struck the truck and the truck bed crashed through the window, causing multiple injuries to his head and chest. Medical reports show that he was in a coma and nearly died. Yet he had a vivid sensation of leaving his physical body and entering into darkness. . . He had the feeling of moving up through a dark tunnel toward a point of light. Suddenly a being “filled with love and light” appeared to him. Now he had a *second* life review [or life review proper], one guided by the being of light. He felt bathed in love and compassion as he reviewed the moral choices he had made in his lifetime. He suddenly understood that he was an important part of the universe and that his life had a purpose.

NDE instance Four: Traveling through Walls

Some NDEers report stories of veridical out-of-body experiences, including travelling through walls to the waiting room where they see their relatives and friends. One patient reported travelling through a wall and seeing her young daughter wearing mismatched plaids, which was highly unusual. Another woman travelled through a wall and overheard her brother-in-law in the hospital waiting room talking to a business associate in a very derogatory manner; she was able to report this back to him later.

NDE instance Five: A Blind Woman Has Sight Restored

As mentioned above, some blind people report being able to see during their NDE. Psychiatrist Brian Weiss tells the story of a blind, elderly woman:

“[She] suffered a cardiac arrest during her stay in the hospital where I [Weiss] was the chairman of the psychiatry department. She was unconscious as the resuscitation team tried to revive her. According to her later report, she floated out of her body and stood near the window, watching [the resuscitation]. She observed, without any pain whatsoever, as they thumped on her chest and pumped air into her lungs. During the resuscitation, a pen fell out of her doctor’s pocket and rolled near the same window where her out-of-body spirit was standing and watching. The doctor eventually walked over, picked up the pen, and put it back in his pocket. He then rejoined the frantic effort to save her. They succeeded.

“A few days later, she told her doctor that she had observed the resuscitation team at work during her cardiac arrest. ‘No,’ he soothingly reassured her. ‘You were probably hallucinating because of the anoxia [lack of oxygen to the brain]. This can happen when the heart stops beating.

’But I saw your pen roll over to the window,’ she replied. Then she described the pen and other details of the resuscitation. The doctor was shocked. His patient had not only been comatose during the resuscitation, but she had also been blind for many years.”

The above instances are bizarre but are also indicative of the existence of life after death. The observed fact that one could have a view of the body of self from the outside suggests that there is an entity which lives without a body and hence could outlive death as the physical body is not required for existence. It makes compelling evidence of life after death.

Magis Centre makes some observations which support the view that NDEs go on to provide compelling evidence about life after death and I fully concur with their views when they say: “When it comes to near-death experience stories, there are many unscientific writings based on the writers’ own agendas rather than actual evidence. However, there is also a growing

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body of legitimate research around near-death experience (NDE) reports, and peer-reviewed scientific journals have published several medical studies on the subject.

The patients' reports reveal a pattern of several recurring elements. These elements include:

- *out-of-body experience*
- *accurate visual perception (while out of the body)*
- *accurate auditory perception (while out of the body)*
- *feelings of peace and painlessness*
- *light phenomena (encounter with loving white light)*
- *life review*
- *being in another world*
- *encountering other beings*
- *tunnel experience*
- *precognition*

In some cases, where patients undergo clinical death and then return to physical life, they report that they maintained consciousness during the clinical death (despite the absence of brain function). Since this clinical death often happens in a hospital setting with professional medical oversight, thousands of these near-death experiences have been sufficiently well-documented for scientific study.

As such, the details of these near-death experience stories can be verified by hospital staff and others who were present at the time. When the claims of an NDE have been verified, the account is deemed "veridical." Virtually every peer-reviewed study reports multiple instances of such veridical data."

The above studies of near-death experiences give considerable probative evidence of transphysical consciousness after bodily death, which is not explained by current physicalist explanations and is unlikely to be presented by future ones. Nor can it be explained by the medical world; this challenges certain ideas of consciousness.

"These features and the occurrence of heightened mental functioning when the brain is severely impaired, such as under general anesthesia and in cardiac arrest, challenge the common assumption in neuroscience that consciousness is solely the product of brain processes, or that the mind is merely the subjective concomitant of neurological events." ----

Dr. Bruce Greyson of the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

I fully endorse the logical inference that mind and consciousness are not part of the brain and not even a part of the physical body as is evident from the fact that the physical body could be perceived even from outside the body. Since these can survive without the body, it gives a compelling logical possibility that these could outlive the physical body and survival of self is possible without the physical body and hence, through NDEs, we have compelling evidence that life exists even after death. The fact that a blind person could see when crossed over to the other side of death is a chilling example which loudly supports the idea that we can outlive death.

If we explore observable incidents, there are innumerable incidents of ghost sighting, manifestation of apparitions and of after-death communication i.e., communications coming

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from discarnate spirits. The incidents are spontaneous and happen sporadically across the world and since the number is hugely large, you must have come across someone who must have narrated such an incident happening to him/her. I, myself witnessed such an incident which is recorded in my book⁶. The incident goes like this:

“I remember on February 23 2018 at 3 p.m. when my father died and I came out from the ICU after learning about his death, I could see my mother for a few seconds, sitting in the area where ICU patients' relatives were sitting. I was baffled because my mother had passed away 36 years ago. I drew the attention of my brother who also gasped at the sight. We kept on gazing at her for a few seconds till our sisters climbed the stairs and came to the ICU and then we found that she had disappeared and instead there was some other old lady sitting there. We had gasped at this incident relating to the visitation of a dead person to the world and we wondered, "Had she come to escort our father.”

The literature abounds in tales of Ghosts and of communications from the dead. While observations cannot be taken lightly, I do not consider these as compelling evidences for life continuing after death because there are other explanations which explain the manifestation of such incidences.

For instance, take my incident which could as well be a creation of the mind through *Pareidolia*.

Pareidolia

Pareidolia is defined as a psychological phenomenon that causes people to see patterns in a random stimulus. This often leads to people assigning human characteristics to objects.

Susana Martinez Conde⁷ maintains that human brains are attuned to perceive faces – an entire region of the brain called *the Fusiform Gyrus*, is dedicated to it. The face detection skill by this portion of the brain, coupled with, our brain's compulsion to extract meanings from the sensory chaos that surrounds us, drives us to see faces where there aren't any.

Pareidolia can also result in the perception of two things from a single image.

This visual illusion created by Pareidolia can be experienced by looking intently at the painting entitled "My wife and Mother-in-law" by W E Hill. You will either see a young woman looking away or the profile of an old woman: two perceptions contained in the same picture. The picture is reproduced below:



Pareidolia is often taken as *a logical explanation* for *apparitions* seen in vague forms in low illuminating environments.

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Pareidolia could be the reason, which, made me feel to see my deceased mother (*presumably an instance of After Death Communication*), on the day my father expired. The state of mind I was in at that time may have ignited memories of my dead mother and made my brain morph her picture on the face of the old lady and I saw my mother. The same thing happened to my brother in whose brain I planted this idea and he also became a victim of pareidolia. But my sisters did not see our mother as no idea was planted in her brains.

Although, we cannot ignore such observable instances which point to the possibility of after-life but as per me, those cannot be taken as compelling evidences for life after death. Maybe further research is needed before we can make a statement that these are evidences of life outliving death.

While ghosts/spirits may not present proof of life after death, the same cannot be said about Reincarnation. There are glittering incidences which show that a person is reborn as a different person and can recall the past life.

Reincarnation provides compelling evidence of life after death

Ian Stevenson (a Canadian-born American psychiatrist, the founder and director of the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia School of Medicine) had spent the whole of his life researching Reincarnation and had researched three thousand cases of children who claimed to remember past lives.



(Ian Pretyman Stevenson (October 31, 1918 – February 8, 2007)

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Stevenson)

His passion for research made him visit India and along with an Indian Researcher Dr. Satwant Pasricha, they researched many Reincarnation cases in India.

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Satwant Pasricha was head of the Department of Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences at Bangalore. She also worked for a time at the University of Virginia School of Medicine in the USA.



(Dr Satwant Pasricha—Former Department of Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences at Bangalore)
(Source: <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/5350079>)

Pasricha has investigated and participated in about 500 cases of reincarnation involving children (referred to as subjects) since 1973 who claim to remember previous lives. She became interested in working in parapsychology because she was not satisfied with the conventional explanations of certain paranormal or unusual behavior
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satwant_Pasricha)

I draw just one of their cases from a paper by Satwant K Pasricha⁸ here which brings compelling evidence that life exists after death

“Pasricha concludes with papers, both having Stevenson as the first author, covering two of the most remarkable and perplexing cases ever to appear in the literature. The first is that of Uttara Huddar, a woman who at the age of 32 suddenly displayed a new personality. This personality did not recognize Uttara’s family or friends and could not speak Marathi, Uttara’s native language. Instead, she spoke what was eventually understood to be Bengali, which Uttara did not know. She called herself Sharanda and seemed to come from another time, as she showed a lack of familiarity with any tools, appliances, or vehicles developed after the Industrial Revolution. Sharanda stayed “in control” for several weeks. Uttara then returned to her normal personality, but Sharanda continued to emerge intermittently.

In addition to discussing various locations in Bengal, Sharanda gave the names of several family members, and these were eventually traced to a family that lived in West Bengal in the early nineteenth century. The names and

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relationships that she gave to her father and six other male members of the family all matched a male genealogy of the family that was discovered. The genealogy had been published in a Bengali magazine with a local circulation, but as Uttara had never visited that state, the authors were confident she had never seen it.

Regarding Sharanda's ability to speak Bengali, Uttara and her family said she had never learned it. One of the authors' associates, Professor Pal, had four long talks with Sharanda in Bengali, and he and five other native Bengali speakers all agreed that despite some imperfections in her speech, she had a solid command of the language. Stevenson (1984) later gave new details in a subsequent report. He noted that Uttara had been accused of having learned Bengali in school, though the evidence for that was meagre. He had also asked a linguist to listen to two recordings made of Sharanda speaking and singing. The linguist said that her accent was non-native Bengali, and, based on the recordings, he did not hear indications of archaic speech that others had heard in conversation with her. Was this a case of possession by a Bengali spirit using the imperfect instrument of a woman who had never spoken Bengali, or was it a very strange case of dissociation, in which a woman, as in examples of multiple personality disorder, suddenly took on the identification and behaviours of a different person, in this case somehow even displaying knowledge she seemingly could not have acquired in her life?"

Apart from the above cases, there have been cases where it was found that a person with a particular birthmark or mark of injury was reborn elsewhere with identical birth/ injury marks.

Dr Ian Stevenson while investigating Reincarnation cases came across several cases where birth wound marks were found exactly duplicated on the body of the Person who got incarnated.

Dr. James Paul Padarkalam⁹ makes a mention of Ian Stevenson's book, "***Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Aetiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects***" which became a classic and has a world-wide readership.

Stevenson discusses cases of people who have birthmarks and birth defects corresponding to the wounds of people of whom they are hypothesized to be reincarnations. About 35 per cent of children who claim to remember previous lives have birthmarks or defects that they attribute to wounds suffered by a person whom they represented in an earlier existence. A total of 210 such children have been investigated by Stevenson's research team. In those instances, in which it was possible to identify a deceased person the details of whose life reliably matched the child's statements, a close correspondence was nearly always found between the child's birthmarks and defects and wounds known to have been inflicted on the deceased person's body. This is currently the most profound objective evidence in favour of the hypothesis of reincarnation and afterlife.

Such instances do provide us with compelling evidence that life does not stop at death but outlives death, indeed wound marks of the deceased person appearing exactly the same as the birthmarks of reincarnated person cannot be explained by any other logic other than it becomes compelling evidence of life continuing after death.

Dr. James Paul Padarkalam also talks about Past Life Regression through hypnotism which is another form of evidence of Life After Death. Let us explore this phenomenon:

Hypnotic Regression into Past Lives

Most of us may know that hypnosis when used to treat psychological disorders often makes the patient go into their childhood times during hypnotic seances and the patient brings to light some deep mental wounds inflicted during childhood. The instances reached during trance have been found to have truly happened in childhood.

There have been instances when some hypnotists have ventured their patients to transgress further and have prompted them to reach their past lives.

The fact that we survive death is substantially proven by the great hypnotist of our time-hypnotherapist Michael Newton¹⁰. He gives an account of his 29 subjects who were taken to subconscious states to recall their childhood memories and then they were encouraged to go further down to superconscious states which took them to states before birth into the spirit world which they described vividly and then they were made to transgress into their past lives. Thus, he made them recall memories of earlier life/lives and the intermediary period of the spirit world when they were stuck as ghosts before being born again. His subjects gave a similar account of their transcendence from death to the spirit world and their getting adjusted to the spirit world by following a standard protocol. The experiences narrated by different subjects in the hypnotized states had a striking resemblance to the spirit world as described by each of them and make us believe that their narrations were real-life journeys into the spirit world and beyond their previous lives.

The trance-like state made the subjects describe their previous lives and hence went on to establish compelling evidence that life exists even after death.

Dr. James Paul Padarkalam⁹ narrates a credible real-life case of Past Life Regression which comes as a surprise to us and forms compelling evidence for life after death

One of the recent self-published cases is interesting. Carroll Beckwith was a minor portrait painter who lived and worked in New York City in the late 19th and early 20th century. He had never done anything outstanding that would make him immortal as an artist. Captain Robert L. Snow is a commander of the homicide branch at the Indianapolis Police Department. He discovered while under hypnosis that he was Carroll Beckwith in a previous life. Snow wanted to disprove the images he had experienced while under hypnosis as a form of cryptomnesia. Snow was already disenchanted with hypnotherapeutic procedures in child sex abuse cases. The regression took place in 1992 and Snow was able to find 28 details to his regression that could be proven or disproven.

Instead of disproving the veracity of his images, Snow proved that almost every recollection he had while hypnotized actually took place nearly 100 years earlier. While holidaying in New Orleans, he entered an art gallery on an obscure side street where he encountered the painting of his memory: the hunchbacked woman. He learnt that Beckwith's personal diaries and an unpublished autobiography existed in a local library in New York. For a detective, this was a definitive piece of evidence to close or prove the case. From Beckwith's diaries, he found that 26 points out of 28 matched with the life of Carroll Beckwith. His recollections included that Beckwith used a walking stick even though he was not disabled, visited France, drank wine (whisky was the popular drink in the US), disliked painting portraits, was upset over bad picture hangings and lighting in art shows, painted the portrait of a hunchbacked woman, his mother died of a blood clot, his wife Berth was childless, and that Berth used to play piano or sing for friends. Snow got the name of the previous personality's wife incorrect but his frank admittance of it adds to his credibility. Snow claims that he has more proof of his previous life existence

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than most murder cases and is convinced that he carries some of the memories of Carroll Beckwith.

Hypnotism is now an acceptable therapeutic tool in psychiatry and patients with psychological disorders are effectively treated through hypnotic trances. The trances reveal the truth hidden in the subconscious mind. Hence the transgression into past lives must also be revealing truth and hence these certainly present us compelling evidence about life after death.

Most Compelling Direct Proof of life after death

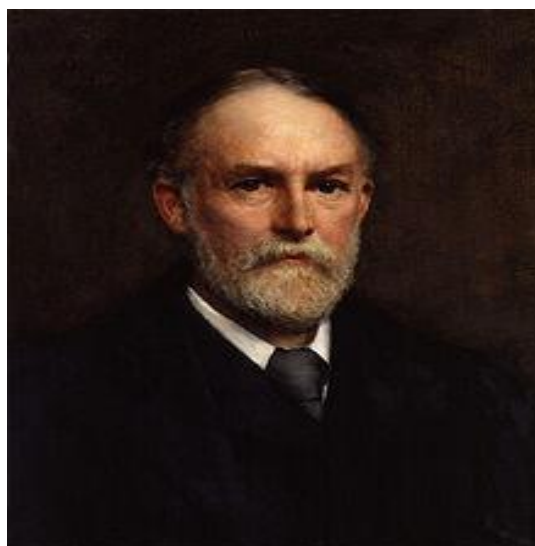
So far, we have amassed a heap of evidence about life continuing even after death but all these evidences are indirect because we could not get a first-hand account from anyone who died and gave us an account of life after death. After all, the ticket is one way!

You will not believe it if I say that such an account is available in literature where a person after death has communicated to the world a detailed account of the afterlife.

Direct Compelling Evidence from a person from the other side of death

In Parapsychology, the name of Frederic Myers holds a lot of respect as he was the first to begin systematic scientific research in psychic phenomena when in 1882, he and his two friends started SPR (Society for Psychical Research) in the UK. Myers spent the whole of his life researching whether life existed beyond death. He came in contact with several accomplished Mediums who could communicate with discarnate spirits through automatic writing. Through them, several learnings were obtained from the dead person which could be verified from contemporary people who were still living. After long research, he was fully convinced that life existed beyond death. For Myers, the most profound question of human life was whether “any element” of the human personality might survive bodily death, and he was radically innovative in arguing that it could be addressed by experimental psychology (1893, p. 44).

During his exploration, he understood how fake mediums could fool others and produce pieces of information supposed to come from discarnate spirits when in reality these had come telepathically from living people. He was so passionate about his findings that he had resolved that if he outlived his death, he would send messages through automatic writings through mediums in such a way that no medium would be able to fake them. He did keep his promise and when he passed away, for the next 31 years he kept sending messages through mediums spread over different parts of the world. The messages were all signed by Myers and each message to a medium was so worded that it did not make a sense to the medium. At the end of each message instruction was given that the message should be forwarded to SPR and when at SPR, the messages were rearranged they fitted like a jigsaw puzzle and made complete sense. The rearranged messages constituted a narration which described different stages after death in the afterlife.



(Frederic Myers (1843-1901) – Founder of SPR who passionately researched Life after Death) The pooled information received from discarnate Frederic Myers by different mediums gives details about the seven stages after death. The details are covered in a paper entitled "Frederic Myers Afterlife Communication" which is an excerpt from the book by lawyer Victor Zammit¹¹

The paper gives details as hereunder:

“The following is a description of these stages as communicated by discarnate Myer (after death messages from Myer)-

- **Stage 1** after death is, of course, the Earth realm. As soon as the Earth experience has been thoroughly comprehended - either through reincarnation or through the exchange of experience with others in other realms - the candidate may proceed to realms beyond the reach of the Earth mind. After death, a person enters Stage Two, the Intermediate Realm.
- **Stage Two-** Upon death, most people go through a heavenly process before entering heaven. Evil people, instead of experiencing the tunnel and bright light upon death, are sent through what Sylvia calls the "Left Door" and enter into an abyss of empty, joyless, nothingness for a brief period of time. After they have reflected upon their actions, they are reincarnated back to Earth. People who commit suicide are sent to a place Sylvia calls the "Holding Place." Here they must make a choice to either proceed through the "Left Door" or embrace God and move on to the Light. People in Holding Place shuffle slowly around in despair in a grey fog with their heads down until they make their decision. According to Sylvia, this is purgatory.
- **Stage three--**After Stage Two, a person enters a more stable world called "the realm of illusion". This is a dimension where things may be created with the mind and shaped by the direct action of the imagination. Though a person may linger in this stage for generations, an eventual decision must be made. The individual either returns to Earth or progresses to Stage Four. Before leaving, however, the more enterprising souls may have an opportunity to experience one of the great wonders of this realm of consciousness - a tour through some section of "The Great Memory." Just as on Earth, one may go to a library and see newsreels of important Earth events of history. So, in Stage Three, one may witness any event that has occurred from the beginning of the human experience. Everything that has ever happened has been recorded by the cosmic memory. Spiritualists call this realm "the second heaven." Most people who die initially find themselves in the second heaven or intermediate astral realms. Viewed as a sort of resting point on the way from Earth to the more ratified upper

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dimensions, it is a thought-created universe that closely resembles an idealized Earth. Its inhabitants seem to live in physical bodies, wear clothes, and so forth - but of an etheric kind that would be invisible on Earth. Most attempts to communicate from heaven stem from here; but because its inhabitants are as yet unfamiliar with the afterlife, these communications can be confusing or wrong.

- **Stage four-** an indescribably lovely existence, is called "the realm of colour." Here one must leave behind all rigid intellectual structures and dogmas, be they scientific, religious, or philosophical. An infinite variety of new sounds, colours, and feelings are experienced here and souls find much wider freedom to function with more highly energized intellect and spirit.

Since Myers had not progressed beyond the fourth realm at the time of his communication, his reports of the higher levels of consciousness beyond this are less detailed and more speculative and are not being described here.

We must appreciate that these communications which have reached us were in a manner which carefully avoided faking by a particular medium and should be treated credible enough as evidence of life after death. Maybe if we the parapsychologists take the efforts of passionate Frederic Myers seriously (he had said that he would try to communicate after death); this could be a starting point for Causal Research on life after death. The Parapsychologists must, with the help of Physicists and Neuroscientists must try to find ways to explore ways and means to prove/disprove the contents of the messages supposedly coming from Frederic Myers after he died. It is said that for thirty-one years after his death, his messages kept coming so at least we the Parapsychologists must give importance to his persistent efforts to communicate to living human beings and must not brush aside the communication as mere nonsense.

These are compelling evidences for the existence of life beyond death but these need to be researched further by scientists to make these accepted by current science.

Before I conclude the evidences for the afterlife, I wish to make an important last observation. There is one commonality in all the above evidences and that is the scenario of transgressing the threshold limit of life and entering the other side of death. All evidences speak of a journey through a tunnel which has very bright light coming from the other side of the tunnel.

This single fact that emerges from all the above types of evidences is, in itself, the most compelling evidence that there is something which outlives death.

With these last remarks, we conclude the discussions about compelling evidence of the afterlife and shall now take up possible counter-explanations which are available in the literature.

Counter Explanations

We have so far discussed the following evidences:

- NDEs
- Reincarnation
- Past Life Regression
- Discarnate Communications from Frederic Myers

Counter explanation for NDEs

Death is taken as the brain becoming dead. In NDEs, brain-dead people were resuscitated and they came back to tell what they observed while their physical body lay on the bed and they were seeing things from outside the body.

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First Counter Explanation for NDE

One of the counter explanations is the possibility that the brain appearing dead may not be, in fact, dead in reality. Anita Slomski⁴ has some arguments about this and presents the counter explanation as follows:

"The likely explanation for such "recoveries" from brain death, according to experts, is that these individuals were never brain dead in the first place. "Errors have been made where people declared brain dead were later found to have spontaneous movement that should not have been possible," says Robert M. Sade, MD, professor of surgery and director of the Institute of Human Values in Health Care at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. "In virtually all those cases, brain-death determination was not done correctly. If you don't go through the exact protocol for brain-death determination, you're likely to have patients diagnosed as being dead by neurologic criteria who are, in fact, not brain dead."

When the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) updated its guidelines for determining brain death in adults in 2010, a committee of experts searched the literature and found no legitimate "reports of patients recovering brain function when the criteria for brain-death determination was used appropriately," says Ariane K. Lewis, MD, associate professor, department of neurology and neurosurgery, NYU Langone Medical Center, New York City, and a member of the AAN's Ethics, Law, and Humanities Committee.

But at the same time, there is no way of knowing how many people recover from brain death because they are usually quickly removed from life support or become organ donors.”

The above counter explanation leads us to believe that the patients were not dead and hence there is no question about their living a life after death even for a short period. But then how do we explain their observations that they made as an entity outside their bodies i.e., outside body experience (OBE)?

As was observed in above near-death experiences, Taylor Steve¹² gives details of people going out of the body at the time of near-death experiences: *Typically, near-death experiences begin with a feeling of separation from the body (or out-of-body experience), sometimes with a humming or whistling sound. Then there is usually a journey through a dark passage or tunnel towards a place of light. There is a feeling of serenity and intense well-being, a sense of calmness and wholeness, which is often so pleasant that some people are reluctant to return to their bodies, and even feel disappointed when they regain consciousness. Often people meet deceased relatives or beings of light. In a smaller proportion of cases, there is a "life review," in which the significant events of a person's life are replayed.*

Could there be a counter explanation to this OBE phenomenon to disprove the existence of life after death?

Medical Science gives explanations as to how a live person can experience as if he is outside his/her body. Near-death experiences are controversial because it is difficult to explain them in neurological terms. Many suggestions have been made—for example, that they are caused by cerebral anoxia i.e., lack of oxygen in the brain, by undetected brain activity, or the release of “psychedelic chemicals” like DMT or ketamine in the brain when a person is close to death.

Blanke Olaf¹³ suggests "Recent neurological evidence shows that out-of-body experiences can be related to an interference with the Temporo – temporoparietal junction of the Brain. This is the part of the brain, which gives a person a sense of self-hood. Stated in simple language - In a normal state, we know exactly, where we are in relation to our body and its surroundings, we

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sense ourselves to be inside our physical body. Once there is an interference to Temporo – Parietal junction of the Brain, the above sense of self being inside the body gets disturbed, and, we, start thinking or sensing ourselves to be out of our body. In other words, an out-of-body experience could be nothing but a Hallucination.

A similar view is expressed by Ramachandran¹⁴ in his book, where he states, “Damage to the right Front Parietal region, disrupts the inhibiting circuits, which, maintain the balance of the self in body. As a result, you get the feeling that you have actually left your body and are watching it from outside. The embodying circuits are vulnerable to a lack of oxygen in the brain, which could explain why such sensations are common in near-death experiences.

All this is fine but how do we explain people experiencing OBE (Out of Body Experience) vividly explain accurate scenarios around death bed and even outside death bed if it was just a feeling or hallucination? How could a blind person having NDE reports seeing during the period she was outside the body.

One could argue that maybe super psi capability gets activated in persons when they are nearing death and they start perceiving things without the use of normal five senses. If this is the case, it opens a Pandora's box of questions which need an answer and more further penetrating research is needed as to what causes this situation when person is supposedly out of body and not otherwise. This also does not negate the fact that person went outside the body but only suggests that when OBE occurs during near-death experience, the person somehow gets Super psi capability. The fact that out-of-body experiences are real is put forth by some scientists which is captured in a book by Erica Simons.

The book by Erica Simon¹⁵ has strong argument against OBE being hallucination. which is put forth by medical sciences. She goes on to say-

The above book takes on the debate whether the visions and experiences narrated in NDEs through OBEs are due to morbid condition of the brain:

Are the death visions, exalted moods, and reported death experiences by the dying real, or are they hallucinations?

If you are suffering from 'Cerebral Anoxia' your brain is not getting enough oxygen to operate normally. Cerebral Anoxia was often mentioned by doctors and nurses as one of the likeliest explanations for deathbed visions. To see whether this was the real cause, Osiris separated all of the dying people who had had visions into two groups: those who, in the opinion of doctors and nurses, were suffering from cerebral anoxia, and those who weren't. It turned out that anoxia made no difference. The visions of the dying patients with cerebral anoxia were indistinguishable from those of other patients.

Cerebral Anoxia could not, therefore, be the cause of these experiences.

Deathbed visions cannot be explained by the medical condition of the dying person, nor by the state of his mind, nor by religious or cultural background. How, then, can we explain them?

The only remaining possibility is that these are genuine psyche experiences. Being close to death can apparently create an altered state of consciousness which captures the experience and makes it deeply etched in memory and is reported in detail when a person returns back from the threshold of death.

If we can accept these experiences as glimpses into the beyond death- and Osiris's research strongly suggests that we have no alternative—then we are ready to venture further into this astounding world. (pp94,99)

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Dr. Osis's research and analysis leads to the fact that the NDE phenomena of Out of body experiences are not due to hallucination experienced by the brain due to lack of oxygen in the brain (*Cerebral Anoxia*) but are real happenings and can be considered as genuine experiences while we transcend from death to beyond i.e to the stage of life after death.

Thus, we see that the counter explanation against NDEs being compelling evidence about life existing after death is inconclusive and we may not be wrong to say that the evidence of after-life still remains un-refutable

Let us now move on to exploring counter-explanations against Reincarnation

Counter explanation against Reincarnation

Reincarnation posits strong evidence for the continuation of life after death. Could there be a counter-explanation?

One counter explanation which immediately comes to mind is that could it be a mere coincidence or an event of chance that a person describing past life just comes true by fluke i.e., reincarnation cases are mere coincidences. Maybe innumerable people may be talking about past lives but were all wrong. Maybe many cases were not investigated and maybe the cases proving false were never reported. Maybe only a few cases by chance proved to come out true.

However, still it is true that quantitatively, thousands of cases have been studied, with the previous person identified in the majority of those. Each case often contains multiple facts suggesting survival – the combined probability of it being mere chance is very low. Also wound marks or birth marks appearing exactly on the same spot and in the same pattern on the body of reincarnated person cannot happen by mere chance. This fact suggests that there is some assignable cause attached to the phenomena and the afterlife is a strong possibility.

Could "psi" ability explain reincarnation

Precognition, as we know is a psi capability possessed by few humans where the human mind defies the current laws of perception and gives evidence that the mind can overtake time and it could perceive events which are yet to happen. Thus, in mind, time has no relevance. It could overtake time and move into future. Same way it could be possible through psi ability to move back in time without using sensory organs.

Can then it be not possible that human mind could transcend back in past and perceive events that happened many years ago. May be human mind perceives through this psi ability, the life of a person who lived century ago and then he could claim to be that person and suggest manifestation of reincarnation. Yes, it seems plausible that a person is wrongly claiming to be a person who lived long ago just because he could get at the life events of that person through psi ability. Psi capability does explain a person revealing the life events of a person who lived a long time ago and is dead now. This does pose an alternate explanation and puts a question mark on reincarnation being evidence of the afterlife

But then this theory also does not explain identical wound marks as birthmarks on the body of a supposedly reincarnated person!!! How so? A person could reveal the events of a dead person's life and claim that it was he who lived that life but he cannot explain the birthmark which is identical to the wound marks of the deceased person.

Thus, the alternate theory falls short of disproving the compelling evidence of the afterlife as posited by the Reincarnation phenomenon.

Let us now go further and explore alternate explanations for Past Life Regression pointing to the existence of life after death.

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Alternate Explanation to Past Life Regression

Past Life Regression using hypnotism claims to transcend a person in trance beyond childhood to the time before his birth in this life and the description of himself as another person becomes evidence of past life when the descriptions do match a person who lived life long ago and is now dead.

This conclusion that he had lived a life as another person could be explained by a theory other than the existence of life after death the "Psi Theory" discussed in the last section. Maybe the transcendence in the trance did not take the person in the past life but made his "psi ability" super active to reach the past and capture the life events of another person who then lived. So, it may not be the life he lived but in reality, he is owning the life of another person whose life events are known using psi ability.

This evidence of life after death is fully explainable by the alternate counter-explanation as discussed.

We shall be concluding this paper after exploring the last evidence of the afterlife i.e., Discarnate Communications from deceased Frederic Myer

Counter Explanation to Communications from deceased Frederic Myer

The discarnate communications presumably coming from deceased Frederic Myer are credible because there is no thinkable explanation about how the mediums got at the contents through automatic writing as the received messages did not make any sense but when these messages were forwarded to SPR as per the wish of the sender, these fitted like pieces of a jig saw puzzle and gave a vivid account of stages of a life lived by Myer after he died.

How did the mediums get those messages is a vital question. We have to find an alternate answer, other than what was stated above i.e., that these were sent by deceased Myer.

The view that these were messages from discarnate Frederic Myers has been severely criticized by many having anti survivalist mind.

Most of the criticism comes from an anti-survival perspective. Some commentators maintain that despite the complex and apparently purposive character of the cross-correspondences, the possibility that they came about through telepathy and clairvoyance from the living is not conclusively ruled out. A particular objection is the prominent part played by Margaret Verrall, who as a classic scholar possessed the detailed knowledge that might have enabled her, subconsciously, to concoct the puzzles in her own scripts, and to telepathically communicate with other mediums and automatists during their own productions. A yet more elaborate theory is that the puzzles were concocted, again subconsciously, by Myers, AW Verrall, Butcher and the others during their own lifetimes, and 'planted' in the minds of the automatists. Such theories draw on what later came to be referred to as the 'super-psi hypothesis' where apparent evidence of spirit survival is actually caused by the unconscious, virtually unbounded operation of psi.

Counter-arguments have been put forward by defenders of the survivalist view. The possibility of a spurious effect created by chance correspondences was acknowledged at an early stage by SPR investigators. However, when they carried out experimental research, they found no evidence to support this idea. The claim has also been examined in depth and rejected by more recent researchers.

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The 'super-psi' explanation of the cross-correspondences has been vigorously challenged, notably by Chris Carter, who, along with other useful material, provides a detailed and clear summary of the Lethe Case, sometimes held up as the cross-correspondence gold standard.

With regard to any unconscious psi contribution by Margaret Verrall, Archie Roy points out that, had she indeed been indirectly responsible, her death might have been expected to bring the phenomenon to an end, when in fact it continued as strongly as before, and for a number of years.

Roy adds two further points:

Firstly, a number of the various cross-correspondence cases involve a two-way process, the investigators' efforts at decipherment invoking a contemporary reaction on the part of the Script Intelligence when it sees it has to make things easier for the investigators to produce a solution.

Secondly, the nature of [super-psi] objections, increasingly elaborate – some would say hopelessly byzantine in their ingenuity – and invoking the operation of some faculty involving telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition on a massive scale in order to avoid the simple hypothesis that the communicators were who they said they were, shows the power of the Cross-Correspondences in displaying the paranormal in action.

(source: *Trevor Hamilton* - <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/cross-correspondences>)

Thus, we are back to square one because the counter explanations and counter arguments to these are equally credible. So, it remains unresolved whether Discarnate Messages carry truth or not. Since counter-explanations do not hold ground, it remains to be researched to refute the truthfulness of those messages.

We conclude the paper with arguments slightly tilted in favour of the compelling evidences for the existence of life after death.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussions have made it amply clear that Past Life Regression as evidence for life after death can be alternatively explained by super psi theory but other evidences as discussed cannot have a credible alternate explanation. The theories based on Near Death Experiences, Reincarnation and Discarnate messages from Myers have some or other evidence which cannot be explained by alternate theories and stand tall as compelling evidences for the existence of life after death.

Still how compelling they be, they fall short of becoming scientific theories and are still considered pseudoscience and one thing is certain, Science does not accept these evidences as proof of surviving death.

For a theory to be scientific, it has to follow some principles.

As per Austin Cline¹⁶ criteria for scientific theories can be summarized by these principles:

- Consistent (internally & externally)
- Parsimonious (sparing in proposed entities, explanations)
- Useful (describes & explains observed phenomena)
- Empirically Testable & Falsifiable
- Based upon Controlled, Repeated Experiments
- Correctable & Dynamic (changes are made with new data)
- Progressive (achieves all that previous theories have and more)
- Tentative (admits that it might not be correct, does not assert certainty)

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Another paper posits that some features of **scientific theories** are that they:

- have been thoroughly tested over an extended period
- provide accurate explanations and predictions for a wide range of phenomena
- are widely accepted by the scientific community
- demonstrate strong experimental and observational support

(<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-the-scientific-theory-definition-characteristics-example.html>)

It is evident that none of the above compelling theories fulfils all the criteria for becoming scientific theories. None of these are empirically testable and falsifiable. Experimental evidences have so far not been attempted. These are not replicable also because all these happenings are spontaneous and instantaneous. So, these are still not scientific.

But that does not mean that these are not credible and could not be true. The evidences hint towards a compelling possibility and only further research will reveal how far these are true. A lot of research is still happening and we look forward to a day when we would have discovered the hard facts and shall no longer consider death as a mystery.

I end this paper with a note that the evidences as they stand now cannot be brushed aside as trash and we must make efforts to reach true facts through penetrating research. Let us see whether the mystery of death will get resolved in our lifetime or, lastly, we come to know the truth only when we die!!

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