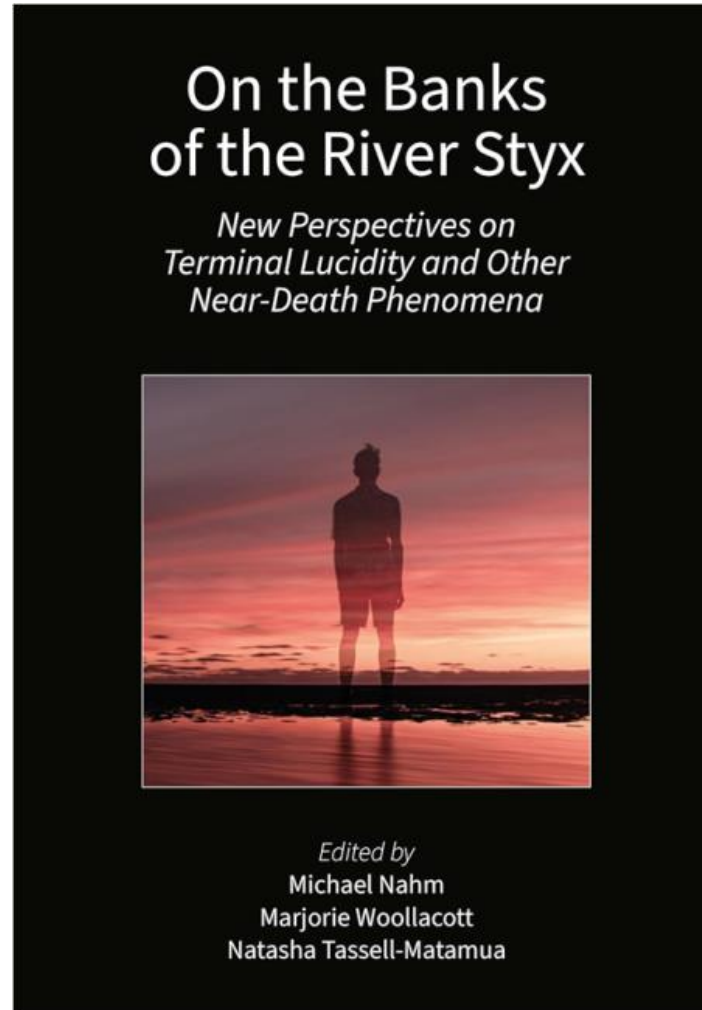


On the Banks of the River Styx

An Overview of the Spectrum of End-of-Life Experiences



Michael Nahm
nahm@igpp.de



2025

<https://cursoespirita.com>



(1862–1943)

The Annals of Psychological Science. Feb. 1906

APPARITIONS OF DECEASED PERSONS AT DEATH-BEDS.

By ERNESTO BOZZANO.

In all ages and among all peoples it has been observed that during the supreme crisis of death the human intelligence has not unfrequently given signs of extraordinary clear-sightedness and power of prevision, or has been subject to perceptions of a sensational nature; these latter being often shared by other persons present or at a distance.

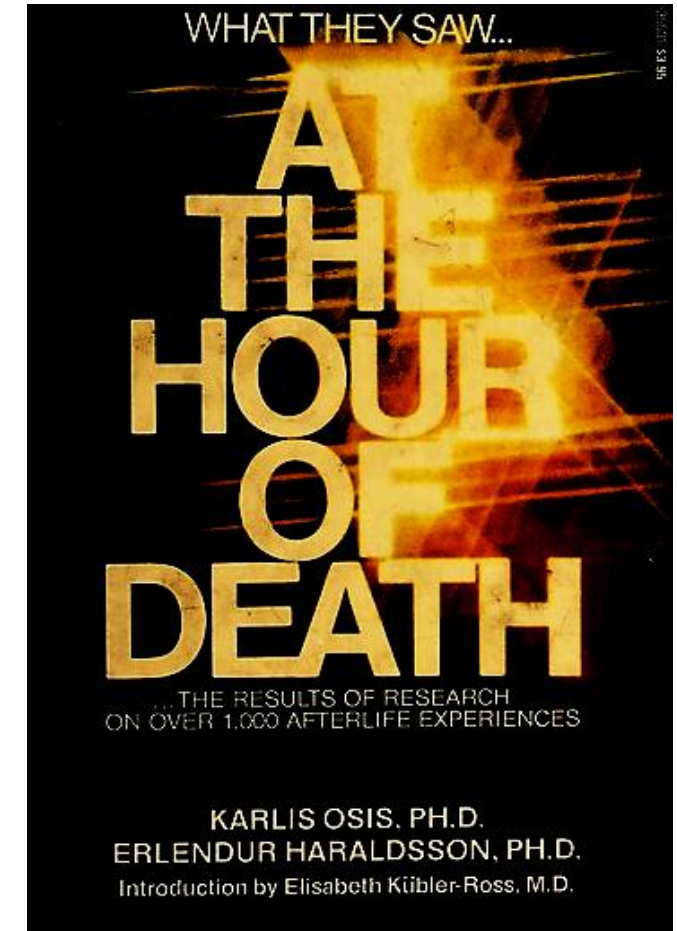
The representatives first of psychological and then of metapsychical science have experimentally investigated these interesting manifestations during the period preceding the death agony, and have easily succeeded in bringing a portion of them within the scope of the known laws of psycho-physiology, but they have not been able to do this in every instance. In fact, the cases appear to be far more complex than had been imagined, and they have a vast range from simple phenomena of hypermnesia and paramnesia to those of telepathic action or perception, and from phenomena of lucidity and telæsthesia to those of retrocognition and precognition; while over and above all these we have sensational episodes of ecstatic visions, of panoramic visions, of symbolical visions, as well as instances of perception of phantasms of deceased persons.

These latter are by far the most common, so much so indeed that popular experience has drawn from them one of

www.aspr.com



<https://iris.hi.is>



1977



INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF PSYCHIATRY
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2025.2503726>

REVIEW ARTICLE

End-of-life experiences in patients: a scoping review of types, characteristics, and implications for the mind-brain relationship

Taís Oliveira Silva^{a,b,c,d}, Kathryn Levy^{e,f} and Christopher W. Kerr^g

^aResearcher of Research Center in Spirituality and Health, Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) (NUPES/UFJF), Juiz de Fora, Brazil; ^bUniversity Network for Research in Spirituality, Federal University of Bahia (REUPE/UFBA), Salvador, Brazil; ^cPalliative Care and Quality of

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Dying patients can experience vivid dreams, visions or unexpected lucid episodes despite declining clinical and mental status. This review examines patient end-of-life experiences (ELÉs) and their implications to the mind-brain relationship (MBR).
Methods: A Scoping Review (ScR) was conducted, searching major academic databases for qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods studies. Data were synthesized narratively and presented in distribution graphs.
Results: Twenty-one papers (20 studies) were included from 1,391 citations, mostly U.S.-based (52%) and descriptive in nature. End-of-life dreams and visions (ELDV) occur in cognitively intact dying patients, are vividly recalled, often feature deceased loved ones, offering meaning, comfort and acceptance, suggesting sustained psychological and spiritual activity despite physical decline. Terminal lucidity (TL), though rarer, is a striking phenomenon, marked by the sudden reemergence of clarity, memory, and communication in severely cognitively impaired individuals across various pathologies, challenging the assumption that consciousness is solely a product of brain function.
Conclusion: Patient ELÉs suggest a possible mind-brain dissociation in the dying process. As research on ELDVs and TL continues to expand, future rigorous studies incorporating clinical controls and neuroimaging will be essential in determining whether these experiences are solely brain-generated or indicative of a broader understanding of consciousness beyond the brain.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 24 September 2024
Accepted 6 May 2025

KEYWORDS

End-of-life experiences;
End-of-life dreams and
visions; Terminal lucidity;
Consciousness;
Mind-brain relationship

Original Manuscript

Deathbed Phenomena, Other End-of-Life Experiences and Their Effects in Palliative Care Teams: A Systematic Review

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Sage

Manuela Bertão^{1,2}, Úrsula Dalcolmo², and Francisca Rego²

Abstract

The dying process includes many subjective experiences called end-of-life experiences. The author conducted a systematic review following PRISMA guidelines to characterize end-of-life experiences and their effects on patients, families, healthcare professionals, and volunteers in palliative care settings. The databases used were PubMed, PsycInfo, and Web of Science. Of 7095 articles found, 12 met the eligibility criteria. The prevalence of end-of-life experiences ranged from 28 to 87% and dreams and visions were the most reported. Eight common themes were found: end-of-life experiences are not uncommon (100%); end-of-life experiences can be comforting or not (83.3%); spiritual transformation of end-of-life experiences (58.3%); hallucinations and end-of-life experiences (50%); normalization of end-of-life experiences (50%); training of health professionals (41.6%); end-of-life experiences as prognostic indicators (33.3%); contribution of end-of-life experiences in grief (25%). These experiences, whether comforting or distressing, play a therapeutic role in facilitating a peaceful death and aiding the grieving process.

2025

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Concerning the dying

Near-death visions (NDVs)

- visions of deceased or religious figures with the purpose to guide them to the afterlife realm
- visions of light and beautiful landscapes
- vivid and memorable dreams of similar contents
- hearing extremely beautiful music
- confused or comatose patients becoming lucid again before death (terminal lucidity)
- gaining unexpected physical vitality, exhibiting a strong desire to eat something, ... (last rally)
- “holding on” for a specific person or event to arrive before dying
- announcing one’s time of death

Concerning the dying

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Near-death visions (NDVs)



Concerning others apart from the dying

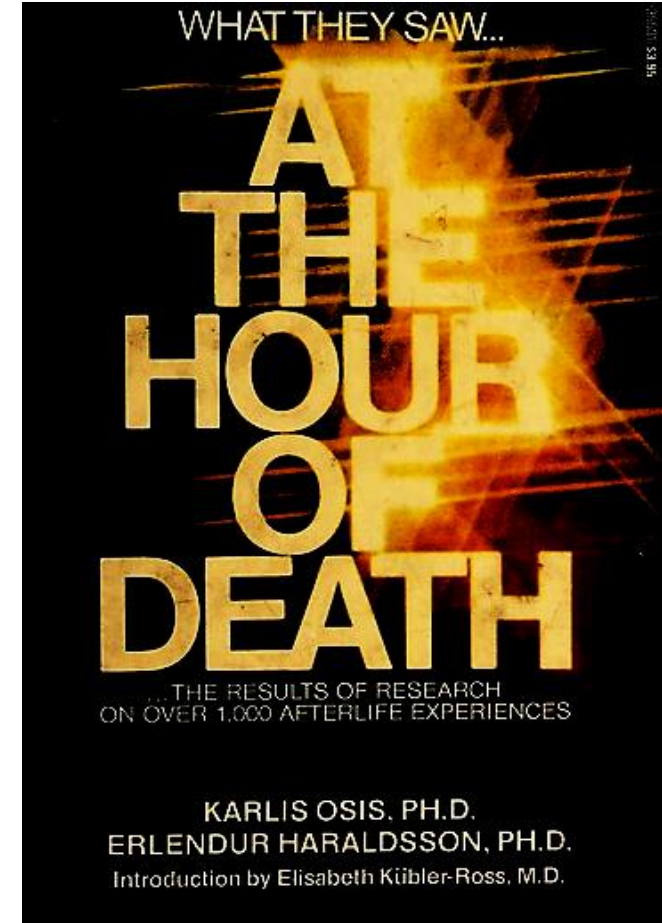
- sharing the transition of death at the bedside of the dying
- physical anomalies (stopping clocks, malfunctioning electrical devices, ...)
- luminous phenomena at or around the dying
- mists or fogs leaving the body of the dying
- inexplicable beautiful music
- **At a distance:**
apparitions, dreams, or telepathic impressions that indicate a loved one has died (crisis apparitions, crisis telepathy)

- ELEs concerning the dying
- ELEs concerning also others
- The context of ELEs

Near-death visions



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Brain-generated hallucinations?

→ Generate testable hypotheses!

Near-death visions



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- High fever, brain impairments, hallucinogenic drugs:
Affect main features of NDVs (e.g., comforting apparitional figures).
- Confused or disoriented state of mind before dying:
Affect main features of NDVs in comparison to being mentally clear.
- Stress and personal desires / expectations:
Affect main features of NDVs.
- Educational level and proneness to superstitious beliefs:
Affect main features of NDVs.

15,000 questionnaires in USA + ~ 700 medical professionals India

> 2,300 questionnaires; > 1,000 interviews

Near-death visions



ChatGPT.com

- None of these hypotheses confirmed.
- Hallucinogenic factors and confused states of mind *hampered* experiencing NDVs.
- Core elements of NDVs:
 - Independent of
 - medical
 - psychological
 - sociocultural factors
- NDVs: Involve *autonomous* factors

Near-death visions



ChatGPT.com

- Great majority = apparitions of the deceased
- “Transition motive”, “preparing” = **exclusively** apparitions of the deceased
- Visions of a dead person whose death was **not known by the percipient** (also in NDEs)
- Interrelation with “after-death communications” (ADCs); NDVs = **subcategory** of ADCs

Elsaesser, E., Roe, C. A., Cooper, C. E., Morrison, S., & Lorimer, D. (2025). What the deceased communicate, what we learn about their state of mind, and how this impacts grief. *Journal of Anomalistics*, 25(2), 242–281.

<https://doi.org/10.23793/ZFA.2025.242>

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Near-death visions



ChatGPT.com

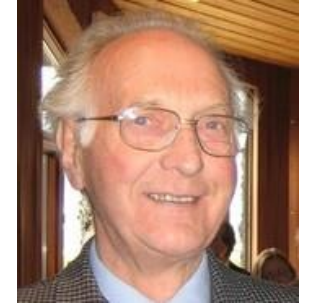
- 21 to 39% of people dying a “slow death”
- “End-of-life **dreams** and visions” (ELDVs): up to 88%
- Overwhelmingly positive and comforting experiences; different from “delirium” and confused states
- Distressing NDVs as well

Terminal lucidity

An unexpected surge of mental clarity before death in people who have previously been in a dull, confused, demented, or non-responsive state

(Nahm, 2009; Nahm & Greyson, 2009; Nahm & Haraldsson, 2009)

www.linkedin.com



- Often goes hand in hand with NDVs
- Most remarkable TL cases in patients with severe neurodegenerative brain conditions (Alzheimer's, brain tumors, strokes, ...)
- Also in children and higher animals

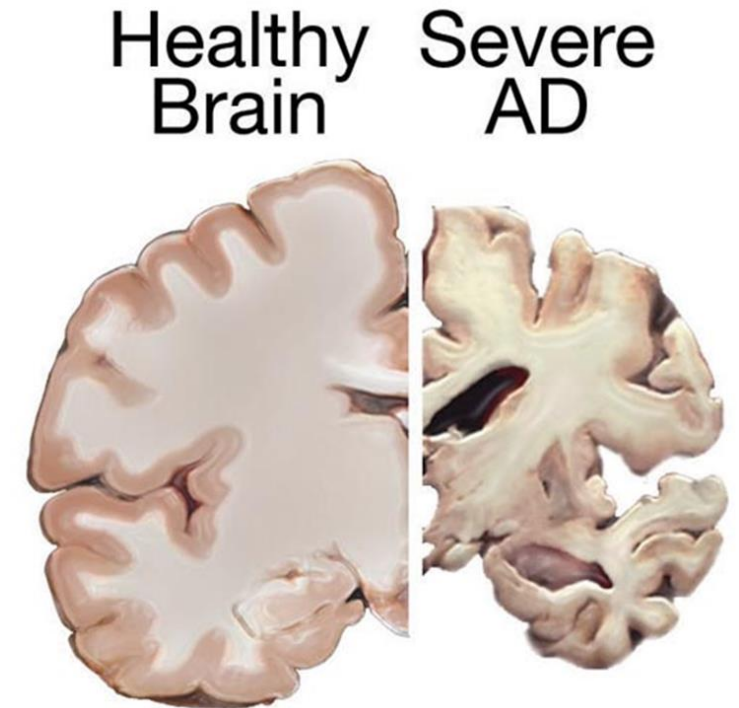
Tassell-Matamua et al. (2026). Terminal lucidity in children. A contemporary case collection. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Online First Publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cns0000458>

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Terminal lucidity: Adults

- 91-year old woman; AD for 15 years
- Didn't recognize her daughters for 5 years
- Suddenly recognized them
- Began a normal conversation about fear of dying, the church, family members
- Died a few hours later

Personal account; cardiologist
(Nahm et al., 2012)



<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-and-dementia/alzheimers-disease-fact-sheet>

Terminal lucidity: Animals

Near-death vision?

- Dog Snowy, very weak + nonresponsive for about 6 h
- Suddenly sat upright and
“looked as if she was looking at an object very, very intensely, and followed that object with her eyes, her head moved slightly from side to side. If a dog could smile, she would smile. You could see a certain happiness radiating from her. She started wagging her tail for a few seconds, then collapsed and fell back into a coma.”
- Died 5 h later

2023

Journal of
**Scientific
Exploration** | Anomalistics
and
Frontier
Science



RESEARCH
ARTICLE

Experiences of Dying Animals: Parallels With End-Of-Life Experiences in Humans

Rupert Sheldrake
rupert@rsheldrake.org
20 Willow Road, London NW3 1TJ,
UK

HIGHLIGHTS

Reports of pet behavior before death often resemble people's end-of-life experiences, suggesting common underpinnings to these events.

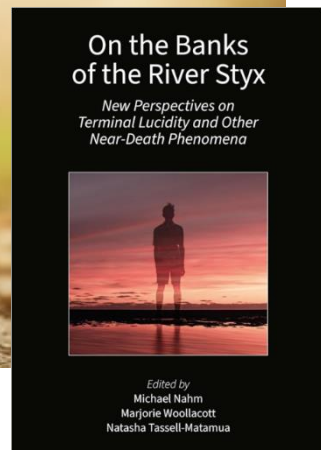
ABSTRACT

Pam Smart

These experiences have an unusual interest to end-of-life experiences (ELEs) in humans.




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Terminal lucidity: Animals

Veterinary Technicians' Experiences With Unusual End-of-Life Phenomena in Animals

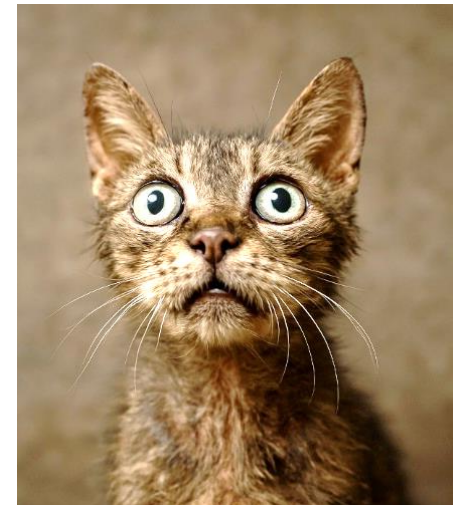
Stephen Claxton-Oldfield¹ , Sara MacEachern¹, and Allaina Boudreau¹

OMEGA—Journal of Death and Dying
2026, Vol. 0(0) 1–12
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DOI: 10.1177/00302228261429318
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2026

“Animals looking intently at something in the room not visible to anyone else, following it with their eyes, and moving their head from side to side shortly before the time of their death”

11 of 43:
yes,
nine on more than one
occasion



- ELEs concerning the dying
- ELEs concerning also others
- The context of ELEs

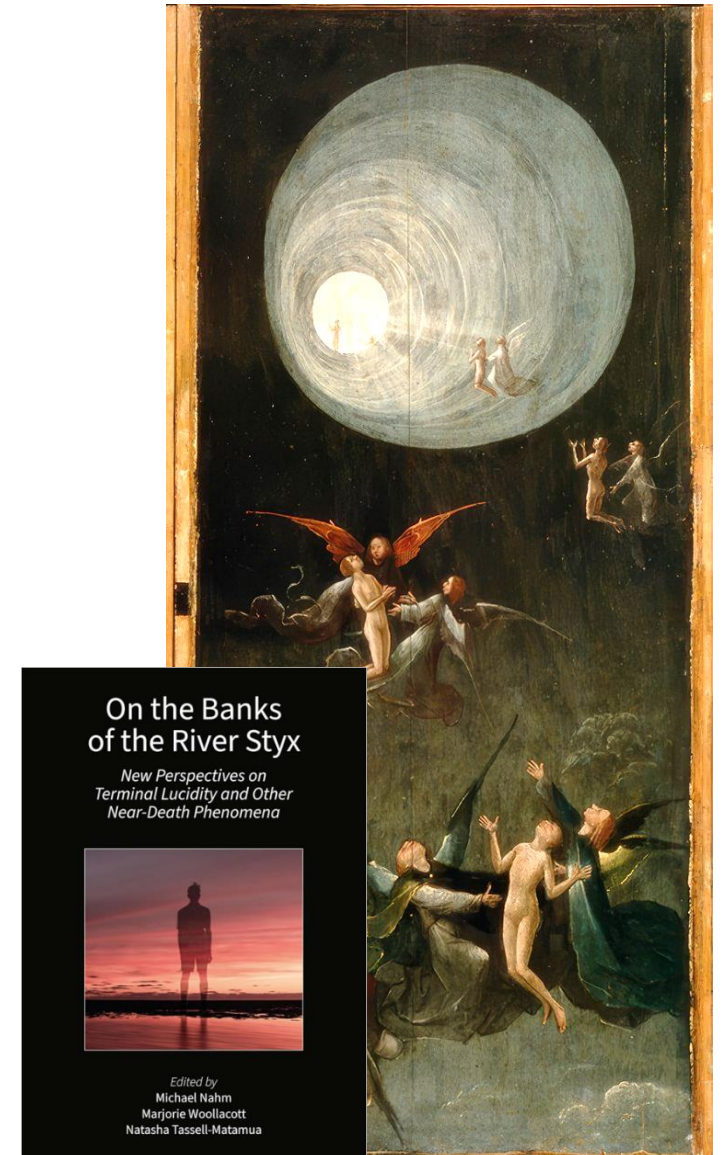
Shared death experiences (SDEs)

Sharing the transition of death at the bedside of the dying

Classical elements of NDEs:

- Out-of-body experience (OBE)
- Moving together with the dying upward toward a bright light
- Perceiving transcendental entities and/or landscapes
-but then returning to the body while the dying continue their journey into the seeming afterlife realm

→ „sick / dying brain” model for NDEs?
(William Peters et al.)



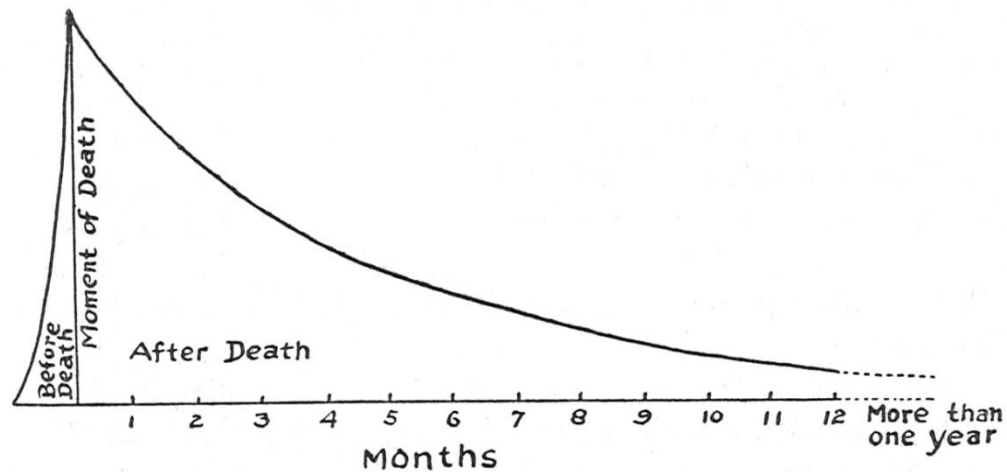
Crisis phenomena

In a distance

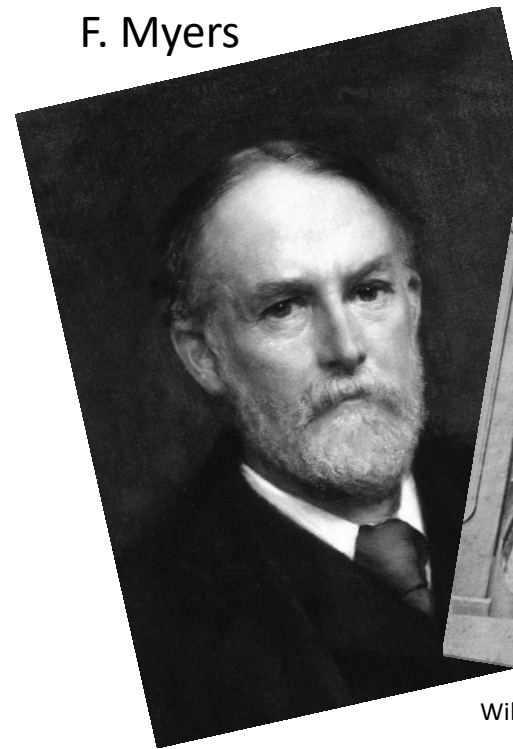
Apparitions, visions, dreams, or telepathic impressions that indicate a loved one is dying / has died

→ Crisis apparitions, crisis telepathy, ...

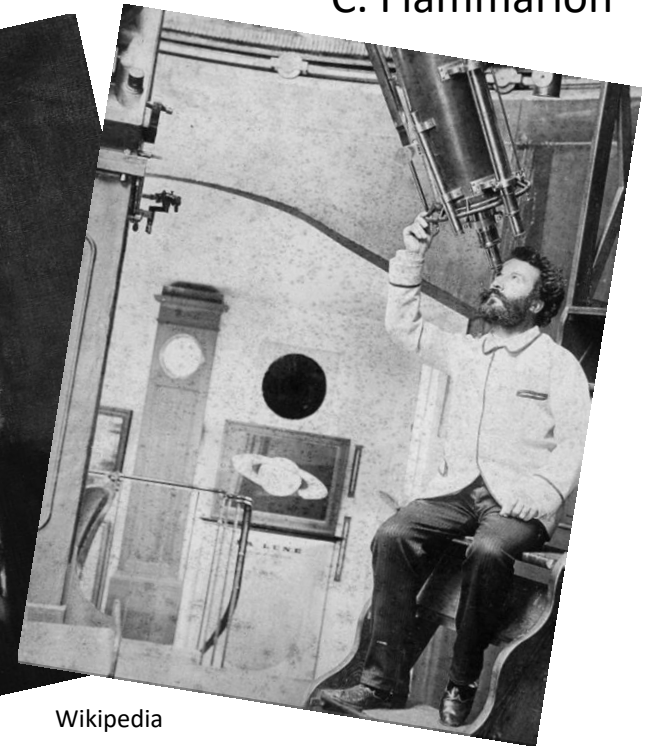
→ **ADCs** (continuum of “is dying” / “has died” cases)



F. Myers



C. Flammarion



Wikipedia

Flammarion, 1923

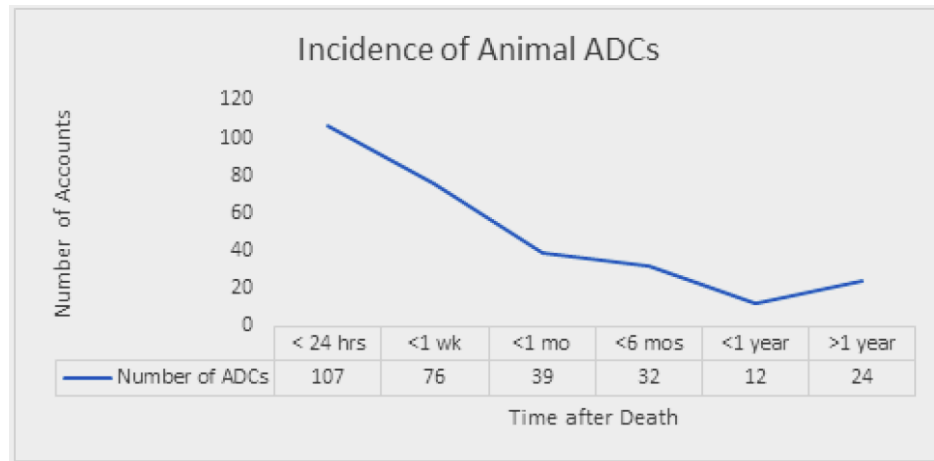
Crisis phenomena

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Apparitions, visions, dreams, or telepathic impressions that indicate a loved one is dying / has died

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Animals

Journal of
**Scientific
Exploration**

Anomalistics
and
Frontier
Science

**RESEARCH
ARTICLE**

After-Death Communications (ADCs) from Non-Human Animals: Parallels with Human ADCs

James G. Matlock
jgmatlock@yahoo.com

Bethany Hilton
hiltonbethany@gmail.com

Rupert Sheldrake
rupert@rsheldrake.org

Pam Smart
p.e.smart57@gmail.com

Michael Nahm
nahm@igpp.de

HIGHLIGHTS

Reports of after-death communications from non-human animals closely resemble those from humans, suggesting common underpinnings to these events.

ABSTRACT

In an earlier study, Rupert Sheldrake, Pam Smart, and Michael Nahm reviewed accounts of end-of-life experiences (ELEs) involving non-human animals. They showed animal ELEs to be similar to human ELEs, suggesting common underlying processes. Here, we consider apparent after-death communications (ADCs) from non-human animals and compare them to accounts of ADCs from humans. We collected 442 accounts of animal ADCs from our own appeals and from reports in the literature. We found a close resemblance between ADCs from animals and from humans in the types of experience—dream visitations, a sense of presence, visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory apparitions, and psychokinetic effects. As with human ADCs, the great

Physical death-related anomalies

Oftentimes: symbolic, associative nature

- Stopping clocks
- Falling pictures
- Breaking personally relevant objects
(tableware, ...)
- Malfunctioning electrical devices
-

“The sudden stopping of clocks at the hour of death has been reported so frequently that one cannot regard it as a mere fiction.” (Splittgerber, [1882](#))

- Up to three clocks simultaneously
- Glass broken; chain with metal weight broken to pieces
- “Thrown” from the wall along with the nail
- Among the most frequently reported physical anomalies in 20th century surveys (Alvarado, 2006)
- Continuously reported until today
(four surveys from 2010, 2024, 2025, 2025)

Physical death-related anomalies

Oftentimes: symbolic, associative nature



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ChatGPT.com

- Stopping clocks
- Falling pictures
- Breaking personally relevant objects (tableware, ...)

→ If only misinterpreted / fictitious reports:
Should be reported as well from animals

→ If only with humans but not animals:
Decisive factor of symbolic anomaly: Dying human
(animals have no sense for symbolic meaning of clocks, etc.)

→ New lines of arguments

- ELEs concerning the dying
- ELEs concerning also others
- The context of ELEs

Near-death experiences

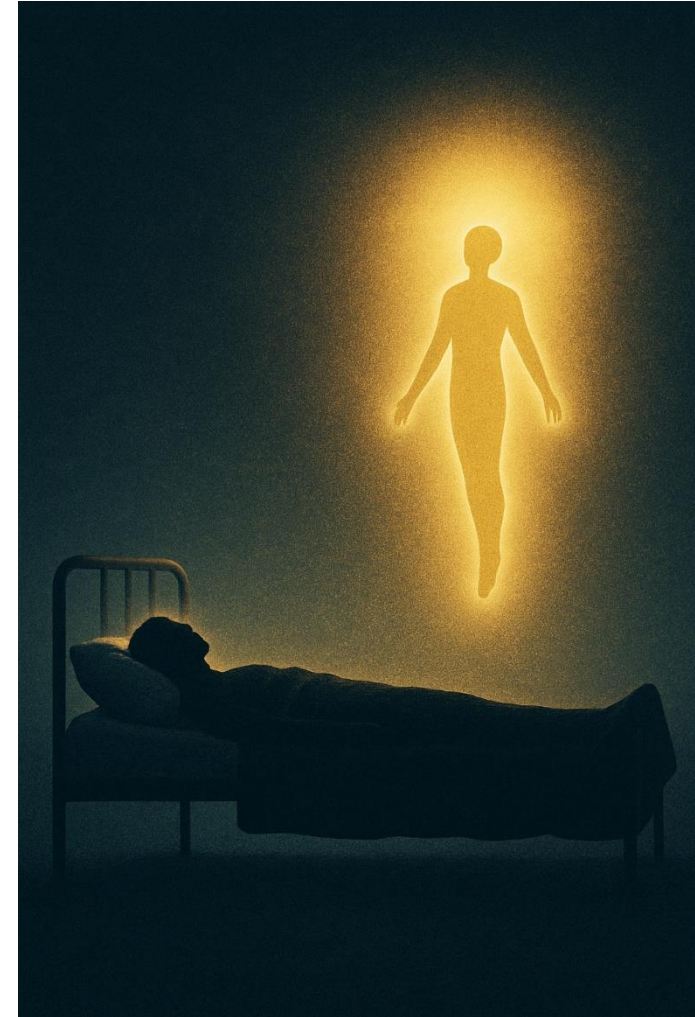
- NDEs = sometimes **before death**:
- Hans Driesch's mother: NDE (TL), ELDV
- Paola Giovetti's case:
Same grandmother featured in NDE and NDV

Explanatory models for NDEs = relevant for NDVs!

Does the brain generate NDEs and NDVs?

→ When do NDEs occur?

→ When do initial OBEs occur?



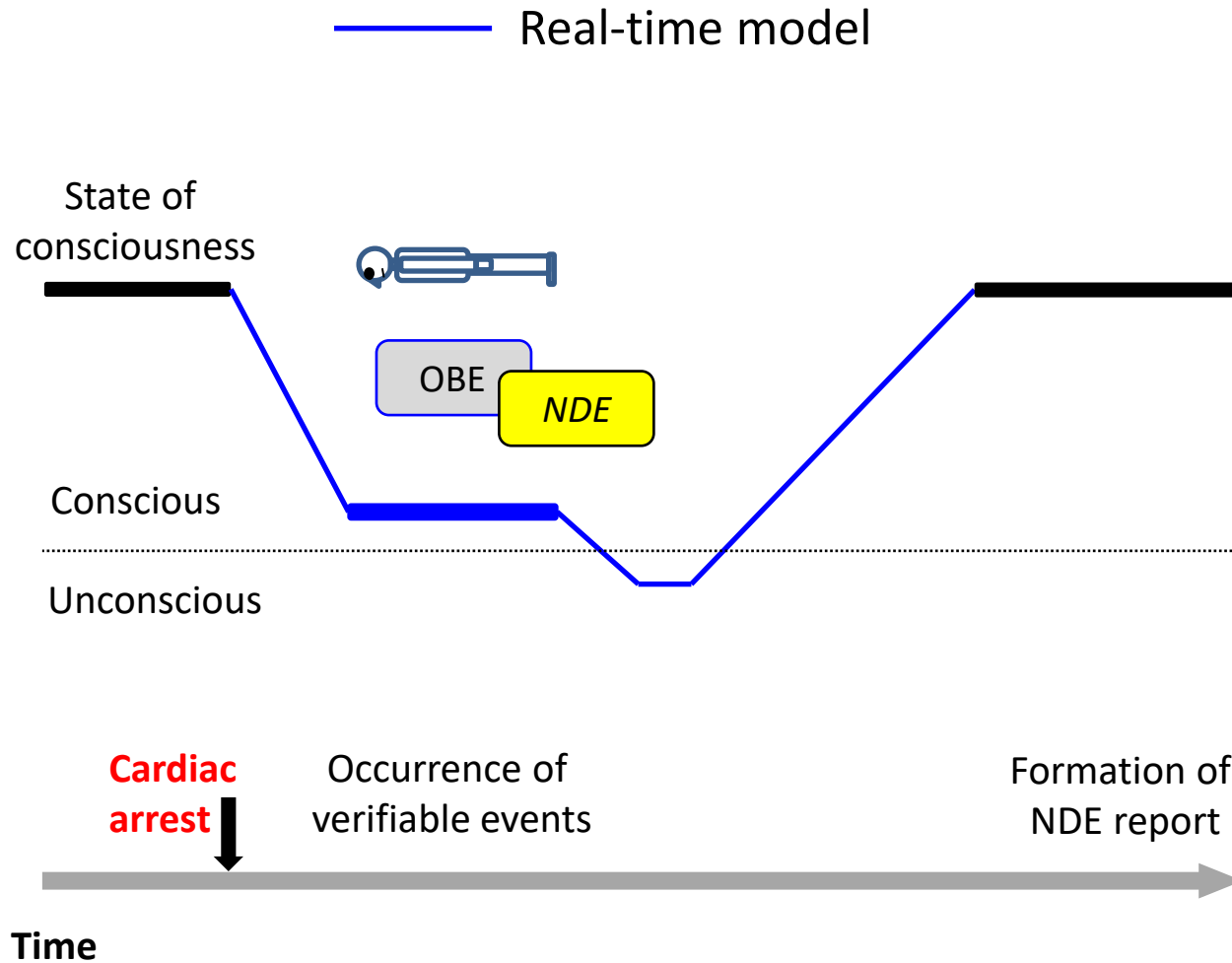
Real-time model

vs.

Reconstruction model

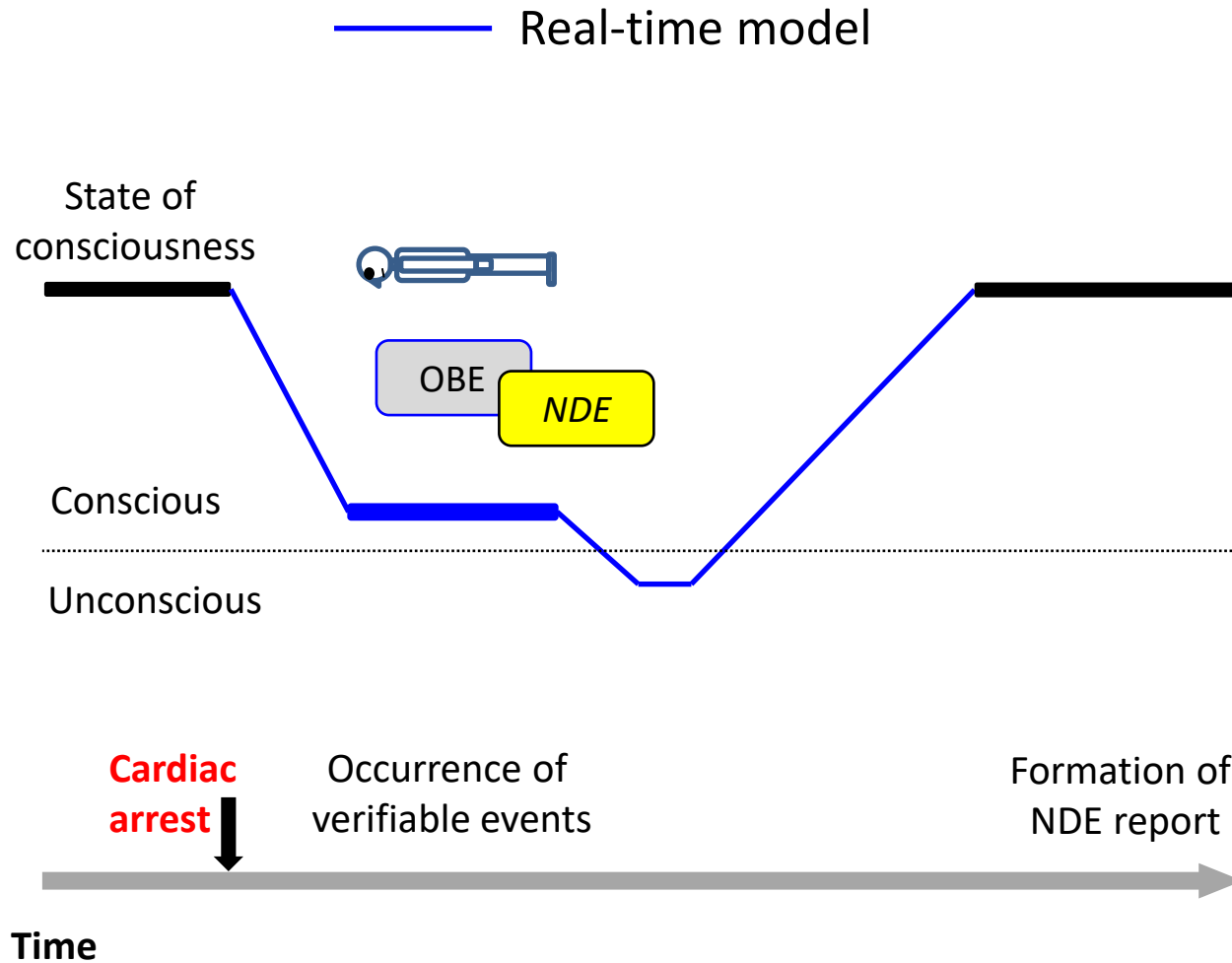
Nahm M, Weibel A (2020).
The significance of
autoscopies as a time
marker for the occurrence
of near-death experiences.
Journal of Near-Death
Studies, 38, 26-50.

The Context of ELEs

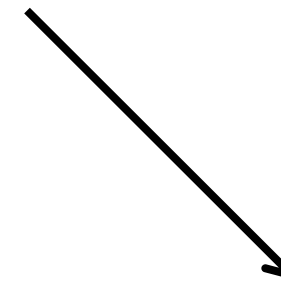


Real-time model
VS.
Reconstruction model

The Context of ELEs

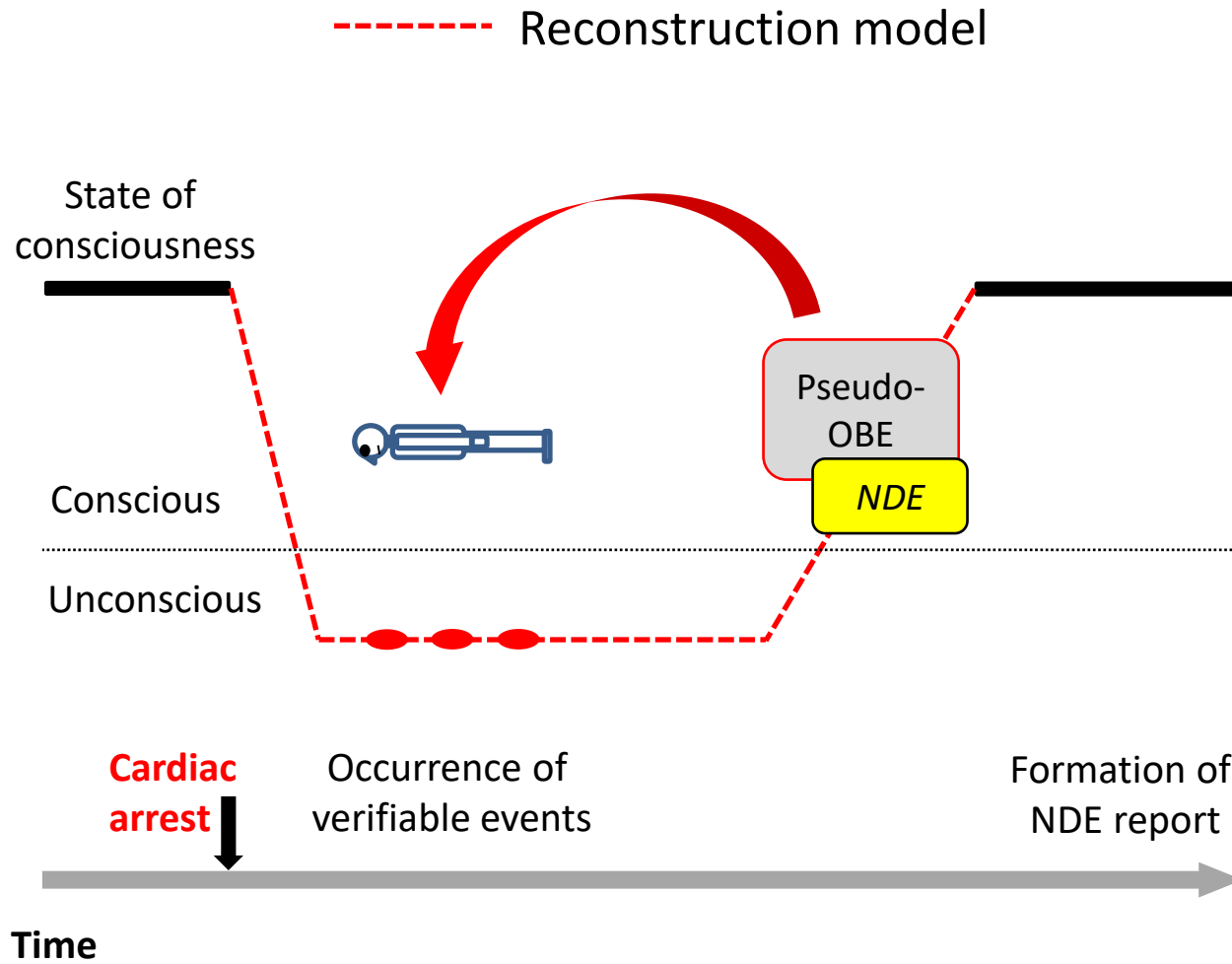


Real-time model
vs.
Reconstruction model

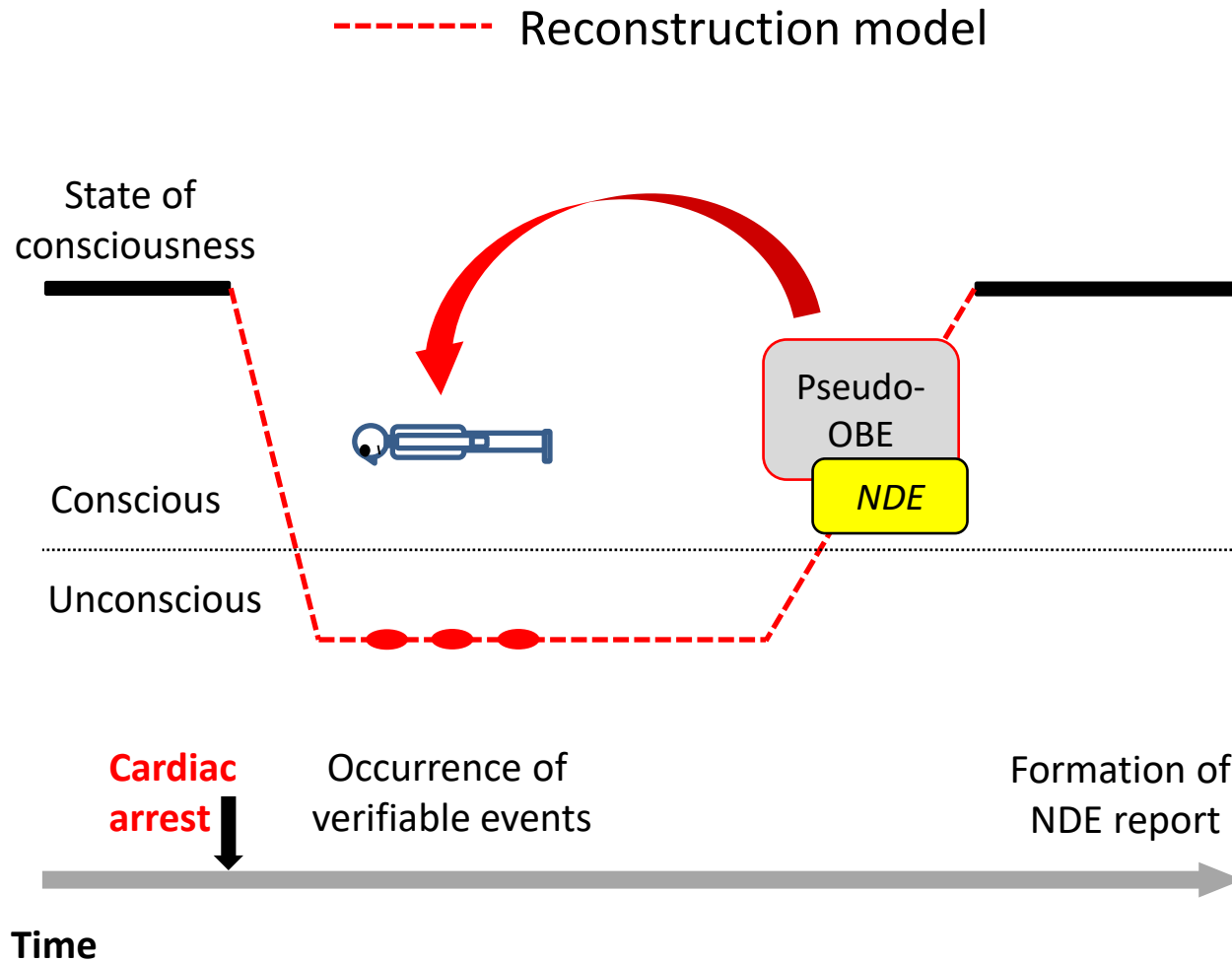


Presentation by
Janice Holden

The Context of ELEs



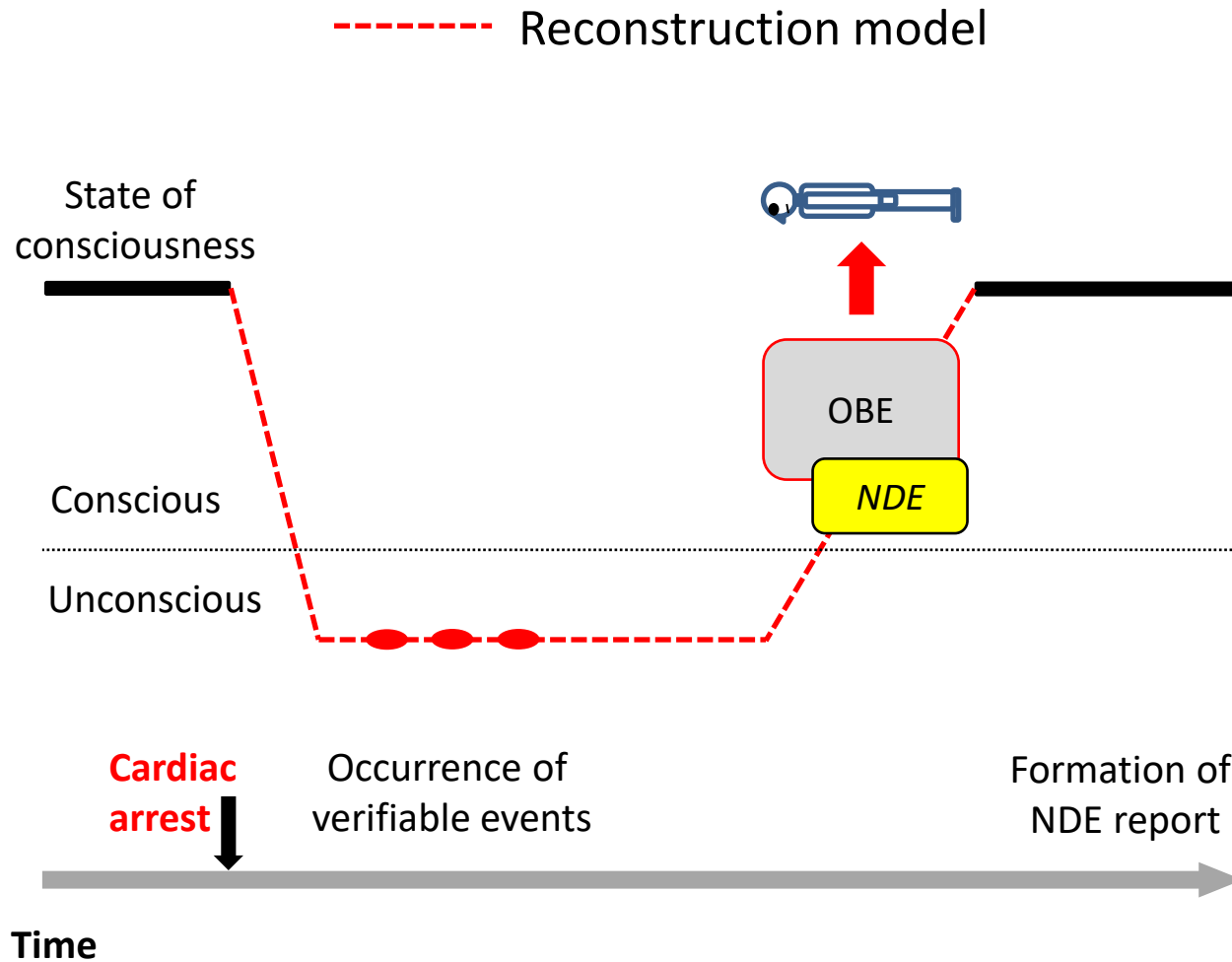
Real-time model
VS.
Reconstruction model



2 problems (out of more):

1. *No experimental evidence* for retrospective pseudo-OBEs comprising *past* events
→ *not a single report; ad hoc*

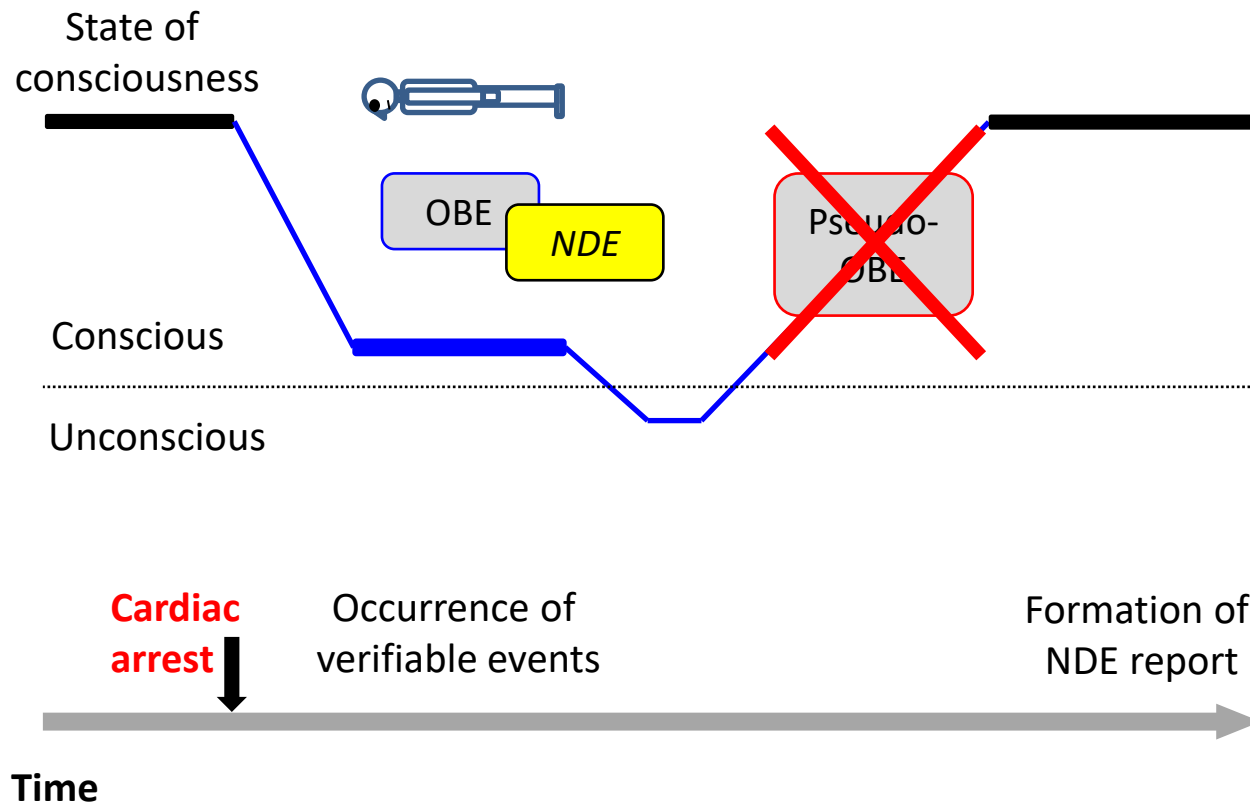
The Context of ELEs



2 problems (out of more):

1.
No experimental evidence for retrospective pseudo-OBEs comprising *past* events
→ *not a single report; ad hoc*
2.
Disturbances of certain brain regions (right TPJ) induce OBEs
→ OBEs should occur *in real time*, e.g. in recovery rooms
→ *not a single recovery-report, only crises*
→ brain states during recovery *unsuited* for eliciting OBEs,
→ also for hypothetical pseudo-OBEs

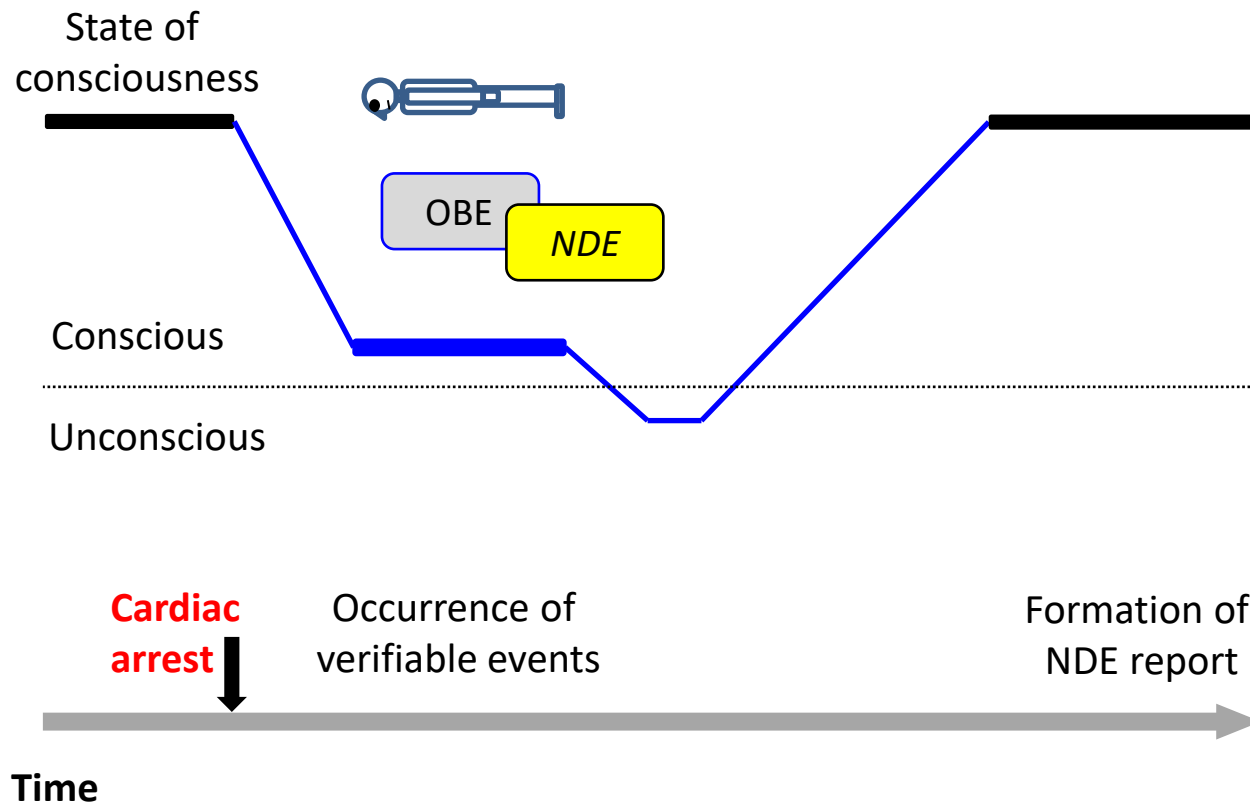
The Context of ELEs



OBEs even after cardiac arrest:

In real time!

The Context of ELEs

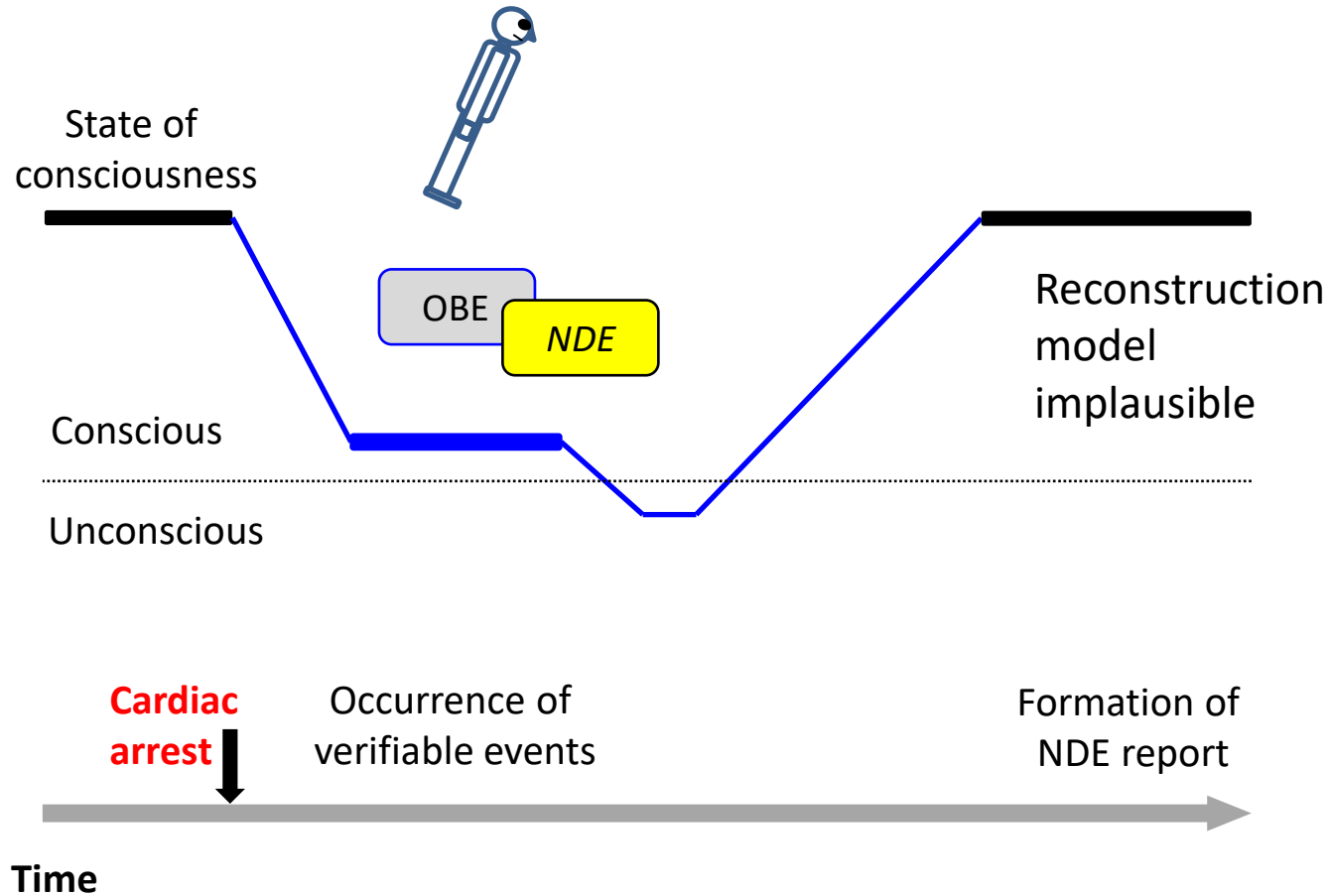


OBEs even after cardiac arrest:

In real time!

physiological model
or
independence model?

The Context of ELEs



Perceiving occurrences
out of reach of the
senses:

→ independence model

Coma experiences (locked-in experiences)



Gil Avni in his coma; Gross & Shamir, 2022

- Beginning + occasionally: OBEs embedded in continuous stream of verifiable perceptions; *even outside his room*
- During recovery phase from coma: *unchanging clear consciousness*; no OBE or NDE.

→ supports **independence + real-time model** for OBEs even under severe impairment of brain functions

Reincarnation cases

Climbing Mount Evidence

A Strategic Assessment of the Best Available Evidence for the
Survival of Human Consciousness after Permanent Bodily Death



2021

Young children talking
about having lived
before.

If authentic:

Not explicable in purely
neurophysiological terms

Reincarnation cases

Climbing Mount Evidence

A Strategic Assessment of the Best Available Evidence

Survival of Human Consciousness after Permanent



2021

No.	Subject's name	Country	Distance between families [miles]	Comments	Sources
1	Ryan Hammonds	USA	ca. 1,400	Exceptionally well-documented case; intermission: 40 years	[55,60,61]
2	James Leininger	USA	ca. 2,500	Impressive case involving a fighter pilot who died in WW II; intermission: 53 years	[62–64]
3	Rylann O'Bannion	USA	ca. 700	Case involving a girl who died in a plane crash; intermission: 26 years	[13,66]
4	Kemal Atasoy	Turkey	ca. 530	No contact between the two families after solving the case; intermission: 50 years	[70,71]
5	Gnanatilleka Baddewithana	Sri Lanka	16	Exceptionally well-documented case, including tape recordings and photographs	[67–69]

No.	Subject's name	Country	Distance between families [miles]	Family relation	Comments
1	Sumitra Singh	India	62	Strangers	“Replacement reincarnation” (see p. 7); 53 interviewed
2	Jasbir Jat	India	19	Strangers	“Replacement reincarnation”; subject beaten to stop pe
3	Veer Singh	India	5	Strangers	Intermission: 11 years; intermission memories; subject
4	Sharma twins	India	10	Strangers	Twin CORT; families hardly met; subjects beaten to st
5	Ishwara twins	India	37	Strangers	Twin CORT; identical twins but differences; remember
6	Sunita Khandelwal	India	220	Strangers	Somatic case; subject refused to eat until hospitalized; p
7	Hettiaratchi twins	Sri Lanka	7	Friendly	Twin CORT; remembered lives of homosexual couple
8	Lalitha Abeyawardena	Sri Lanka	30	Strangers	32 interviewed informants; no interest to the families; c
9	Purnima Ekanayake	Sri Lanka	105	Strangers	Somatic case; birthmark matching wounds of deadly ac
10	Ma Khin San twins	Myanmar	?	Strangers	Twin CORT; remembered lives of Japanese soldiers; u
11	Ratana Wongsombat	Thailand	75	Strangers	Previous personality (PP) = religious woman; intermiss
12	Bongkuch Promsin	Thailand	6	Strangers	PP = murdered Laotian; subject used Laotian words; ir
13	Necip Ünlütaskiran	Turkey	50	Strangers	Somatic case; six birthmarks corresponding to wounds
14	Semih Tutusmus	Turkey	1.2	Casual	Somatic case; defect of right ear matching fatal injury o
15	Nazih Al-Danaf	Lebanon	11	Strangers	Strong Lebanese case with several specific statements r

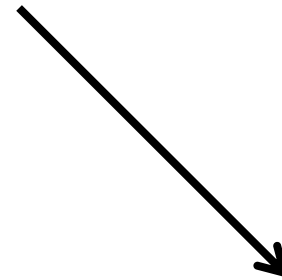
Reincarnation cases

Climbing Mount Evidence

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Survival of Human Consciousness after Permanent Bodily Death

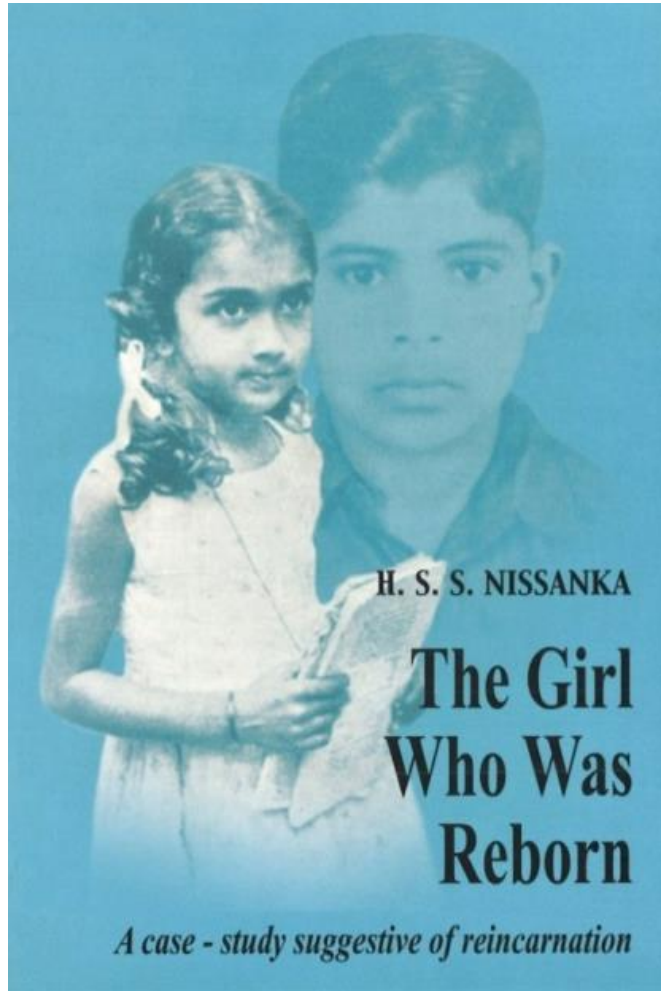


2021



Presentation by
Jim Tucker

Reincarnation cases



Exceptionally well-documented

- Multiple witnesses
- Audio recordings
- Many photographs

- 77 of 82 verifiable statements correct, 3 partially correct, 2 incorrect

- Behavioural characteristics
- Numerous recognitions



Gnanathilaka meeting her “previous family” for the first time (Nissanka, 1964)

Matlock JG, Weerasekera A, Nahm M (2024). The case of Gnanathilaka Baddevithana. An early independent investigation of one of Ian Stevenson’s reincarnation cases. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 38, 614-635.

Reincarnation cases

- 20% of cases:
intermission memories;
similar to **NDEs**:
- OBEs with **verifiable** content,
meeting deceased + spiritual figures, ...
→ **NDVs**



Gnanathilaka meeting her “previous family” for the first time (Nissanka, 1964)

→ Explanatory model of reincarnation cases
= also relevant for NDEs + NDVs → ELEs, some cases of terminal lucidity

- Intersections between ELEs, ADCs, NDEs, reincarnation cases; continuum of experiences with overlapping phenomenology
- Explanatory models for one of these experiences (ELEs, NDVs) need to take these intersections into account; **synthetic approach**
Otherwise: **incomplete understanding of their nature**
- **Independence model has merits + warrants further investigation**
 - Follow evidence wherever it leads us
 - Good company:
Current trend in philosophy of mind towards **non-physicalist** approaches



Systematic research into ELEs, NDEs, ... :

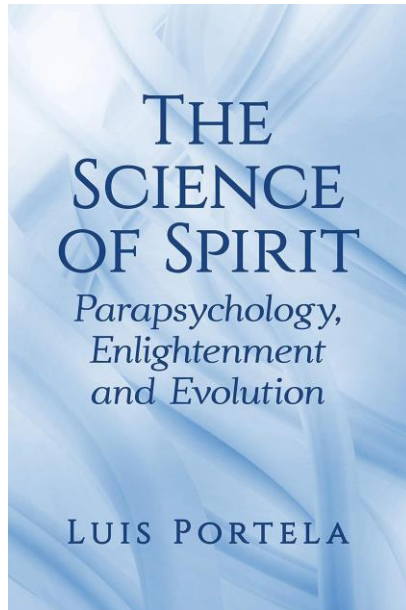
Initiated + first performed by parapsychologists and other “outsiders.”

→ Significance for advancing frontiers of science!

→ Provide innovative impulses, show the way. Funding?

Thanks a lot to the BIAL Foundation and its Chairman!

2020

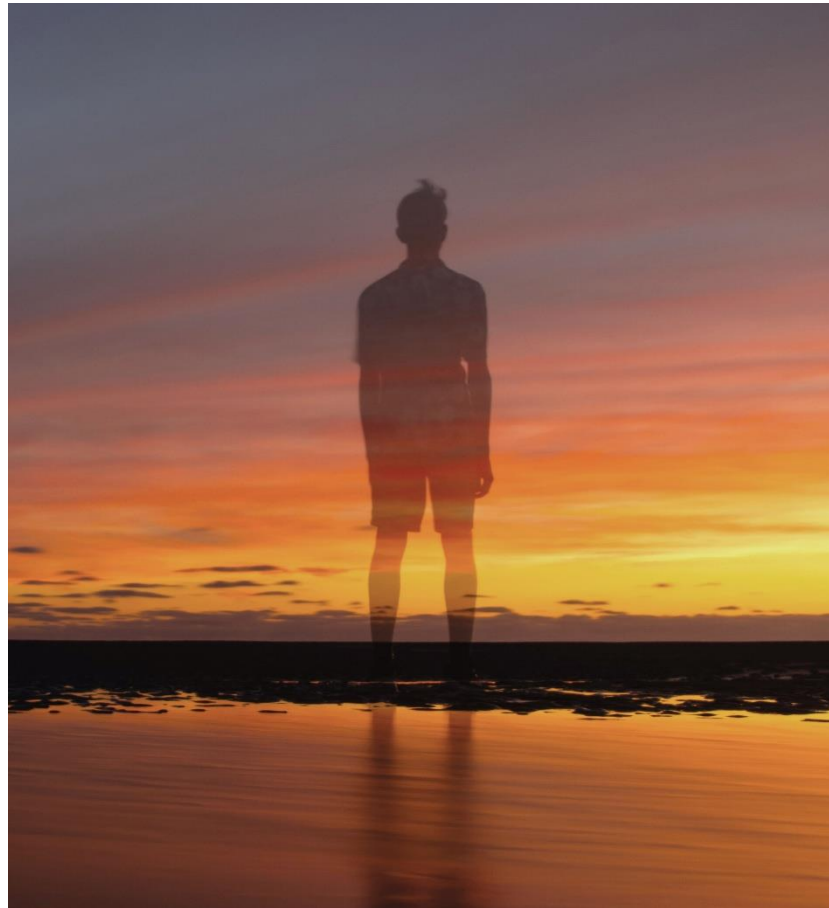


<https://www.fundacaobial.com>



“A true scientist must never say again, *a priori*, that parapsychological phenomena do not exist. On the contrary, the scientist must study and investigate, demonstrating, through the rigor of scientific methods, what is true and what is false.”

Thank you very much for your attention



O. Nahm

