

A person is walking away from the viewer down a brightly lit hallway towards a large, glowing circular opening at the end of the corridor. The scene is filled with light rays emanating from the opening, creating a sense of depth and mystery.

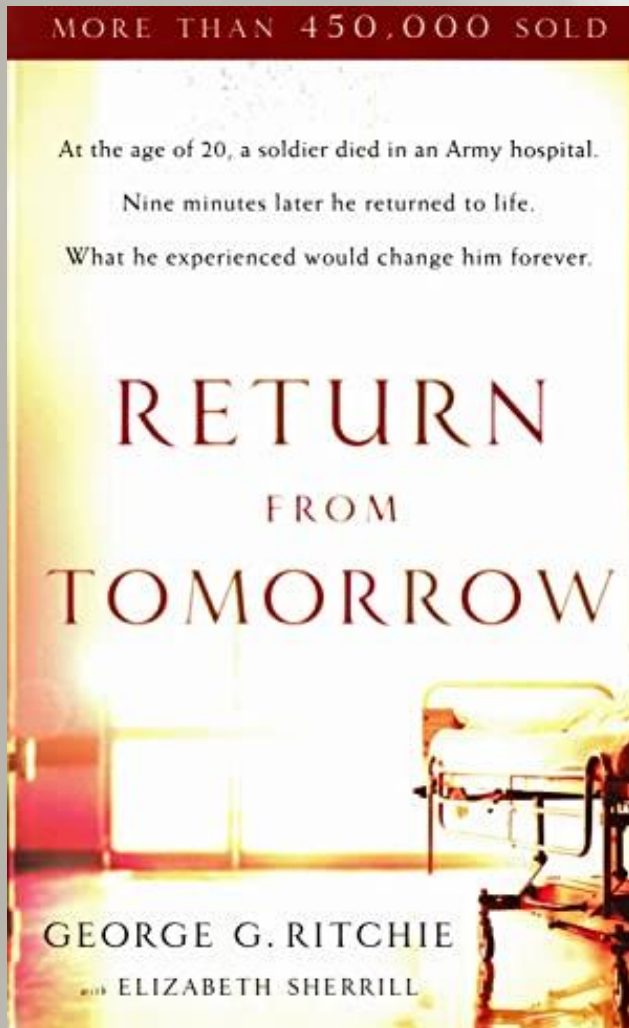
Near-Death Experiences

A case for the afterlife?

George Ritchie, Return from Tomorrow (1978)

Medical Student 1943

Double pneumonia (antibiotics less prevalent) led to cardiac arrest

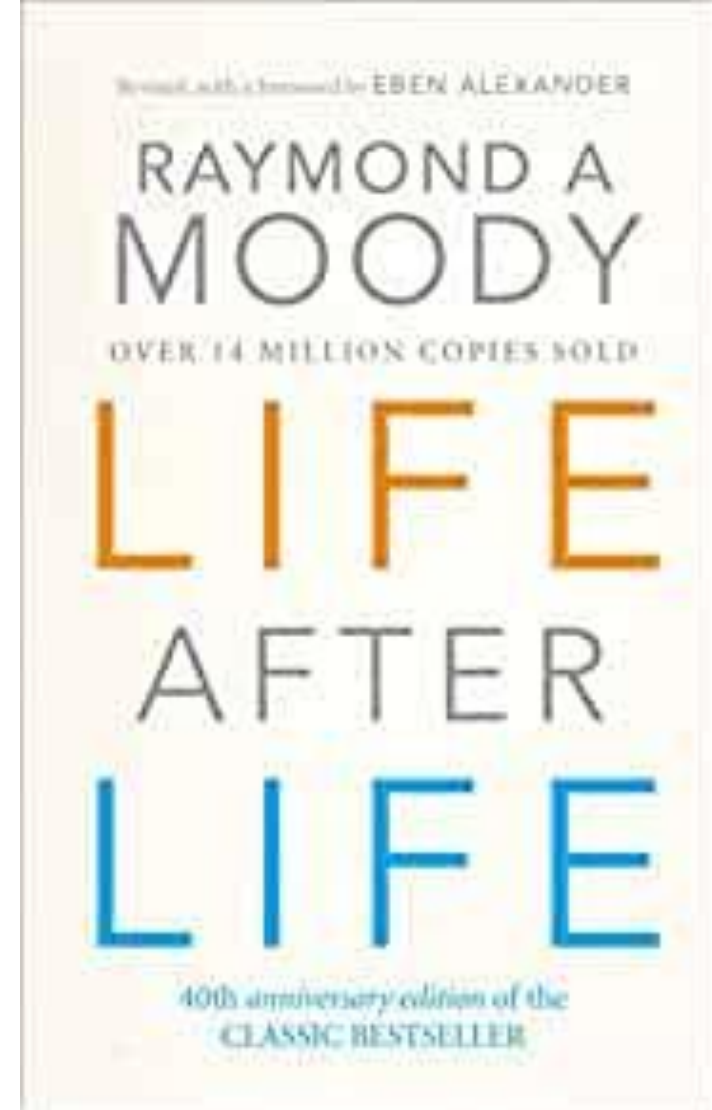
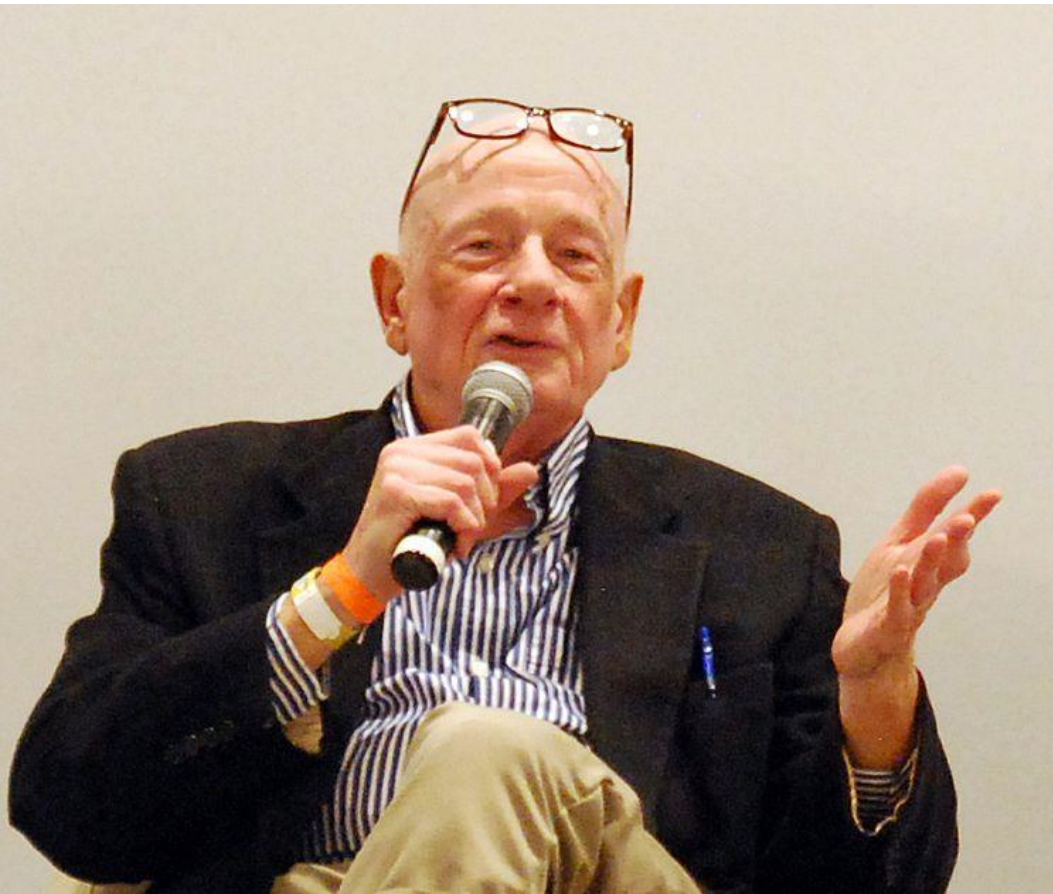


“Following an episode of very high fever and extreme tightness of the chest, he passed away: he ceased breathing and his pulse also stopped. He was pronounced dead by a doctor and covered with a sheet. But a male nurse was so upset by the death of this medical student that he managed to persuade the attendant doctor to administer an adrenalin injection in the chest near the heart – a most unusual procedure in those days. Having been “dead” for more than nine minutes, George Ritchie regained consciousness, to the immense surprise of the doctor and nurse. It emerged that during his spell of unconsciousness, the period in which he had been pronounced dead, he had had an extremely powerful experience of which he could recollect a great many details.”

Consciousness Beyond Life, Pim van Lommel MD

Raymond Moody MD PhD

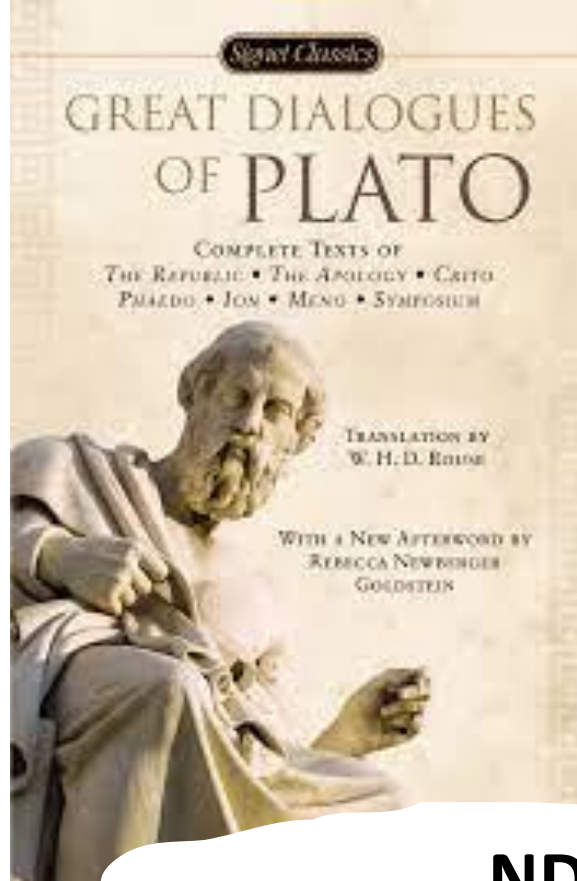
First to use the term
'Near Death Experiences'



1st published 1975
14 million copies
150 interviews

“Professionals [by the early 1970s as a result of resuscitation technology] came to see death not as an instantaneous event but as a gradual process—one that could sometimes be interrupted and reversed... During close brushes with death, people were reporting experiences of what, for most of them, was another reality; experiences that ...were occurring at the very time they were closest to – or actually in the first moments of-death.”

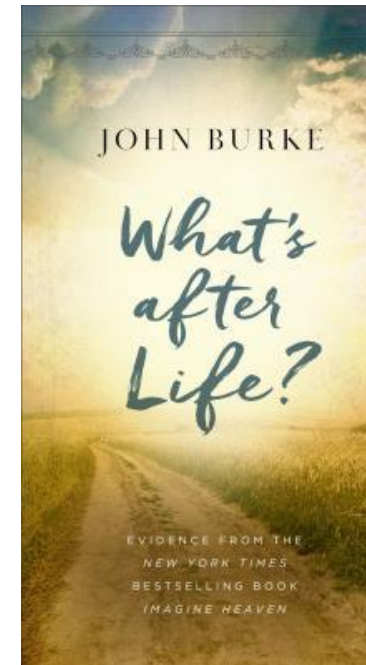
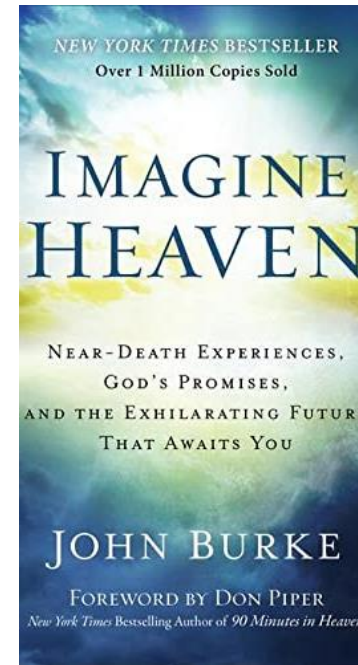
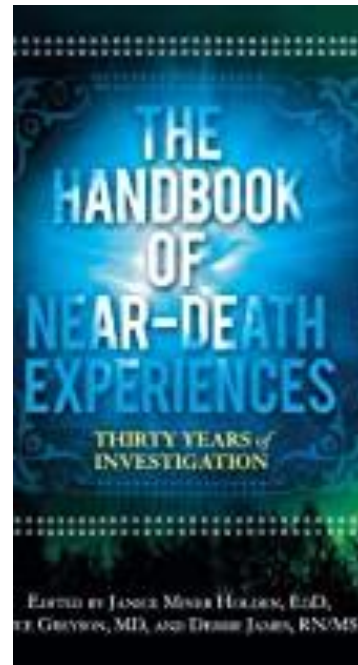
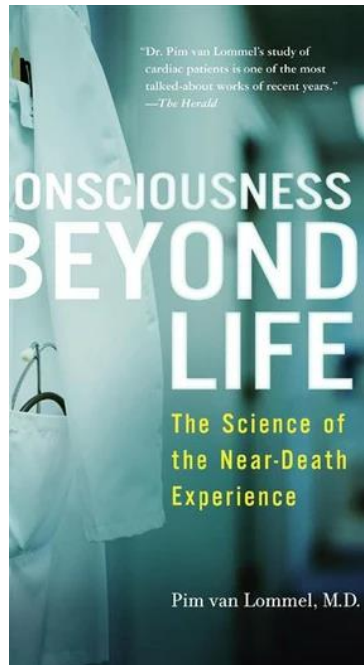
J.M. Holden, B. Greyson & D. James
Handbook of Near-Death Experiences



NDEs in Ancient Texts

"... accounts of near-death and out-of-body experiences can be found in the oral traditions and written literature of about 95 percent of the world's cultures."
**Holden, Greyson & James
Handbook of NDEs**

Systematic research & documentation since 1970s



Prevalence of near-death experiences in people with and without REM sleep intrusion. Presented at 5th European Academy of Neurology (EAN) Congress 2019

- 2019 study of 1035 people across 35 countries
- As many as 1 in 10 people have had an NDE

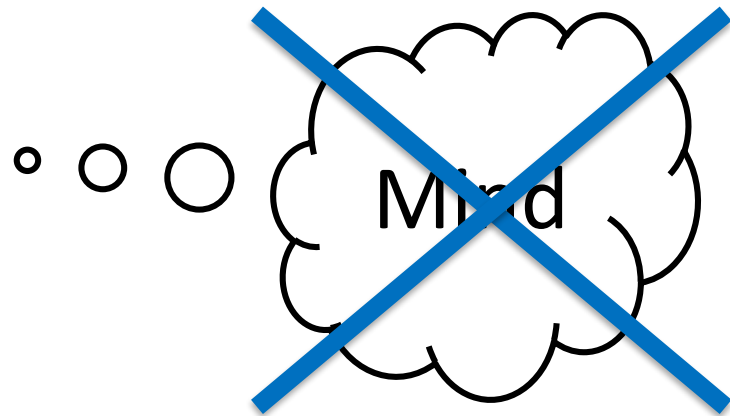
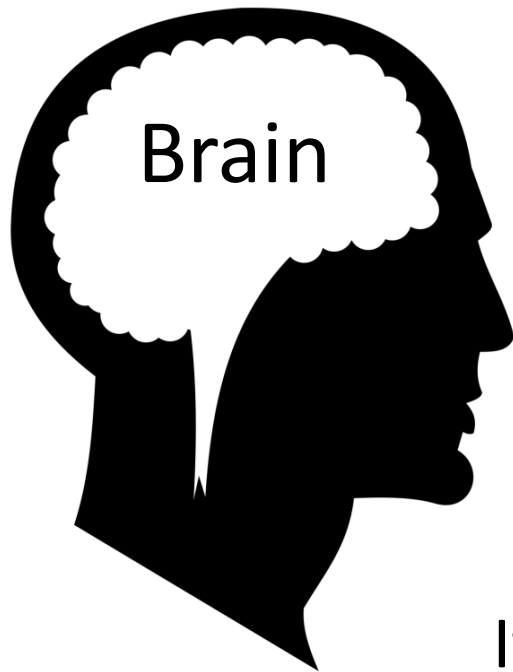
Common Features of an NDE

- Out-of-body experience (OBE)
- Holographic life review
- Encounter with deceased friends/relatives
- Return to the body
- Disappearance of fear of death
- Transformational effect – Many go on to show greater compassion, put greater importance on relationships afterwards

A grayscale image of a person walking away from the viewer down a long, brightly lit tunnel. The light is very bright at the far end, creating a strong lens flare effect and casting a long shadow of the person on the floor. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

**Why are NDEs so interesting
apologetically?**

Are we just our brains?



If so, then conscious awareness ought to cease when the brain dies

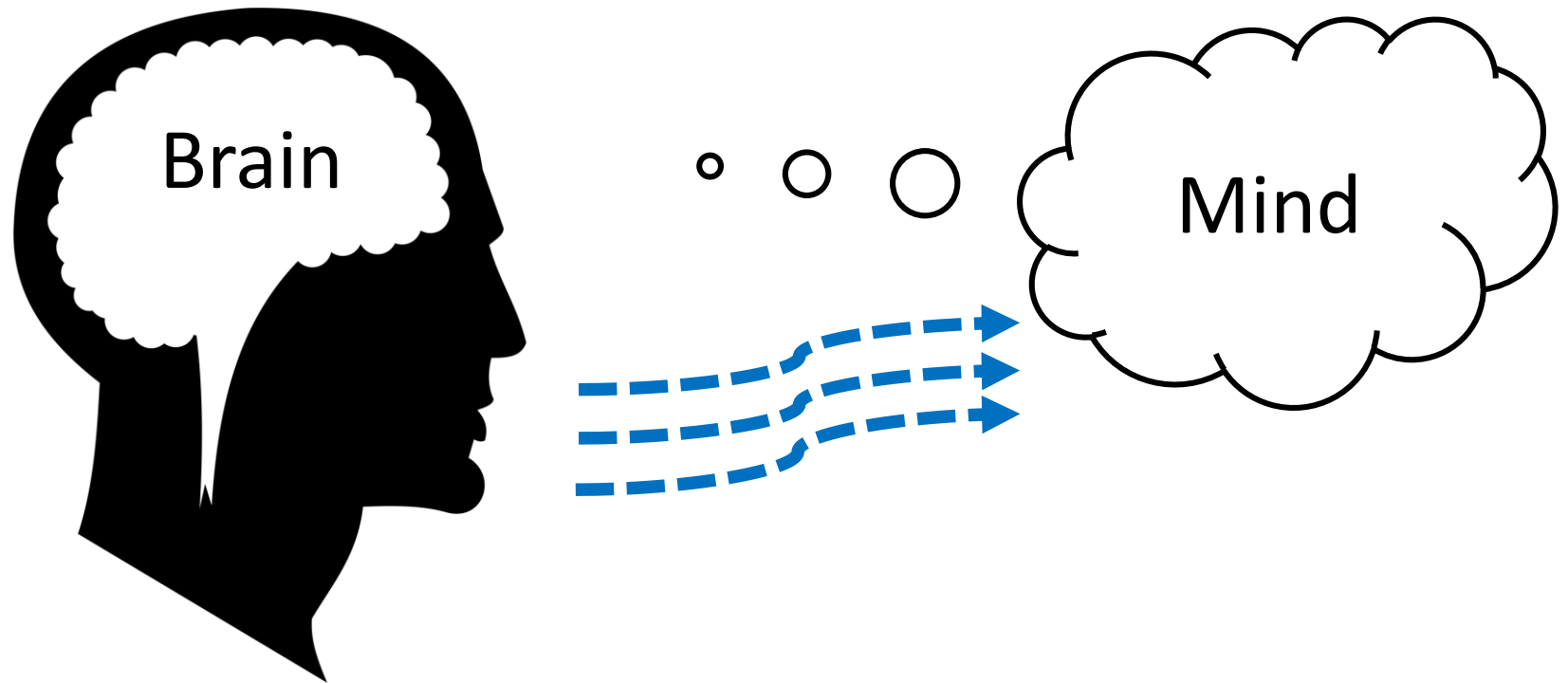


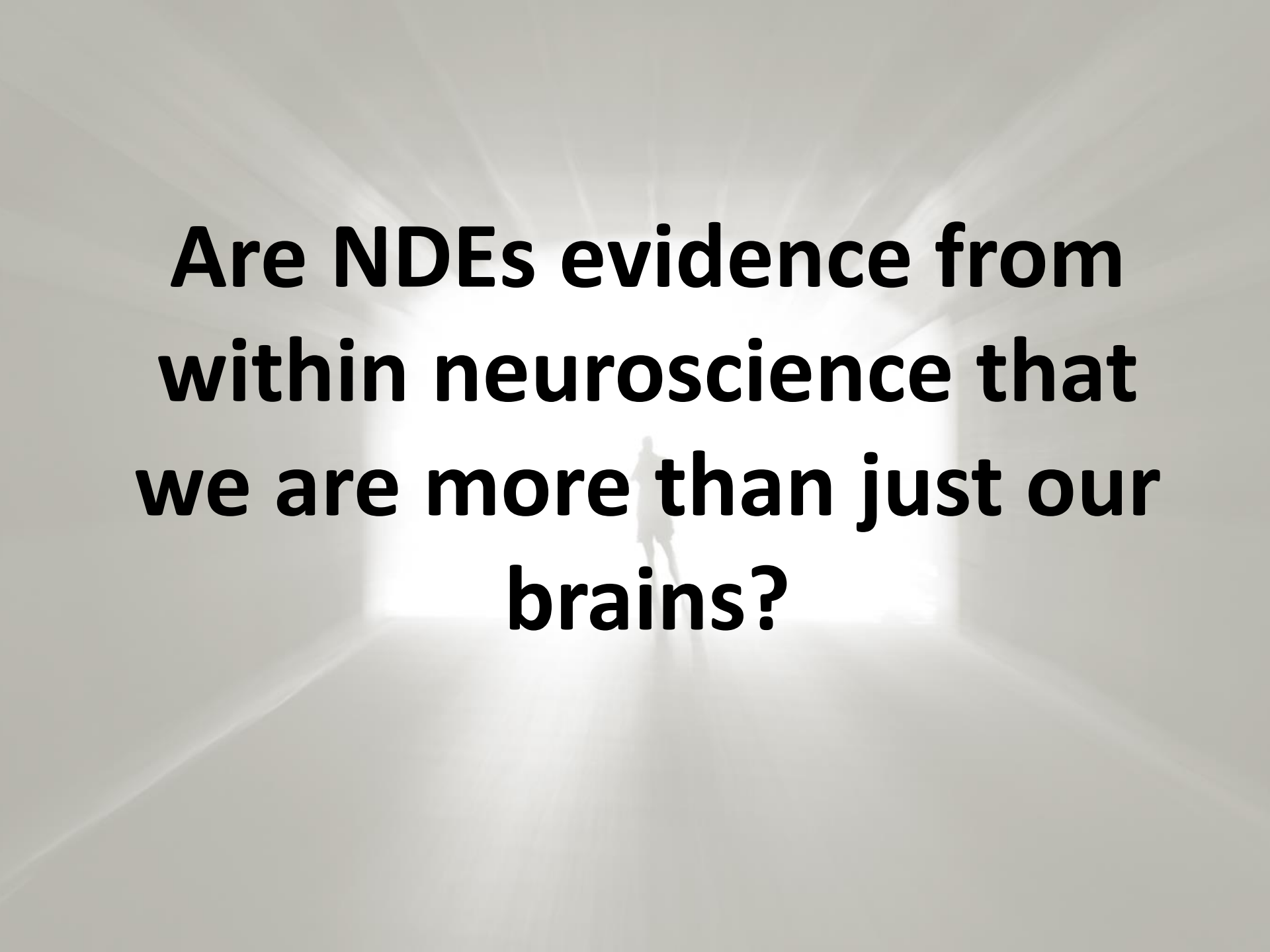
'You are your brain'

'You', your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll might have phrased it: "You're nothing but a pack of neurons".'

Francis Crick, The Astonishing Hypothesis 1994

Also presents a challenge to
some non-reductive
physicalist approaches



A person is walking away from the camera down a long, brightly lit hallway. The light is very bright at the end of the hallway, creating a strong lens flare effect. The person is in the center of the frame, walking away from the viewer. The walls and floor are light-colored, and the overall atmosphere is bright and somewhat ethereal.

**Are NDEs evidence from
within neuroscience that
we are more than just our
brains?**

A grayscale photograph of a person standing in the center of a long, brightly lit tunnel. The person is silhouetted against the intense light at the far end of the tunnel. The walls and ceiling of the tunnel are visible, with light rays emanating from the opening. The overall atmosphere is one of mystery and illumination.

Objections to NDEs

1) NDEs are Anomalies

Response: If materialism is true, NDEs are not only rare, they are impossible. NDEs are not rare

2) Perhaps Fragments of Consciousness Linger in the Brain?

Response: States of fragmented or recovering consciousness would more likely produce a confused experience rather than a lucid one.

3) NDEs are caused by oxygen deprivation to the brain which produces hallucinations

Response:

- All van Lommel's patients were clinically dead. If anoxia is the cause of the NDE, everyone should have had one, but only 18% did.
- Hallucinations and NDEs are described by patients as different things

4) NDEs can be Induced by Drugs, Hypogravity, or Electrical Stimulation

Response:

- van Lommel: Induced non-NDEs are different to NDEs
- NDEs occur in a state of clinical death, which requires explanation

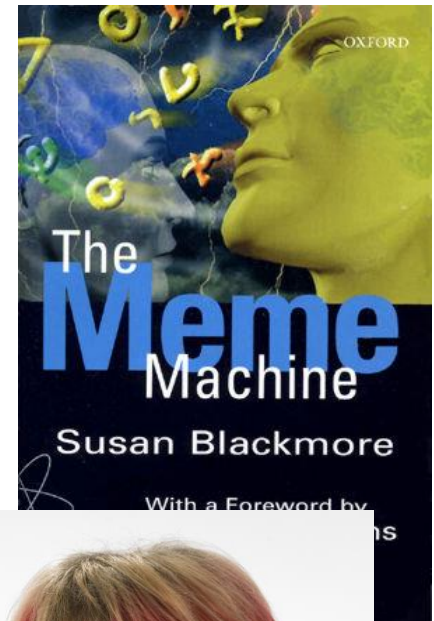
5) NDE-ers Embellish their Story Over Time

Response: van Lommel's patients were interviewed within 7 days of CPR

6) NDE Life Changes are Simply a Function of Facing Up to Death, not of having had an NDE

“The limited evidence available suggests that this change is a function of simply facing up to death, not of having a near-death experience, but when NDErs behave altruistically, this helps spread their NDE memes – “I’m a nice person, I’m not so selfish now, believe me. I really did go to heaven.” Wanting to agree with this honestly nice person helps spread the memes. And if the NDE survivor really does help you, you may take on the NDE memes as a way of returning the kindness. Thus, NDE memes spread, and among them is the idea that people who have had NDEs behave much more altruistically.”

Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine*



6) NDE Life Changes are Simply a Function of Facing Up to Death

Response:

- Facing up to death does not induce NDE-related life changes, otherwise all heart-attack survivors would change their lives.
- The concept of memes is hypothetical and untestable. Clinical death, verifiable accounts and behaviour change after NDE are testable.

7) Evolutionary Psychology: Feigning Death Promotes Survival

Dissociation helps identify and implement new strategies for escape

Response: The NDE-er is not feigning death, they are clinically dead and therefore unable to troubleshoot anything.

8) NDE accounts are easily fabricated

Response: True and some have been fabricated

- But just because could be fabricated doesn't necessarily mean they have
- Many NDE observations have been verifiable
- Focus on accounts from those who have nothing or little to gain from sharing their experience



NO. 1 NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLER

PROOF *of* HEAVEN

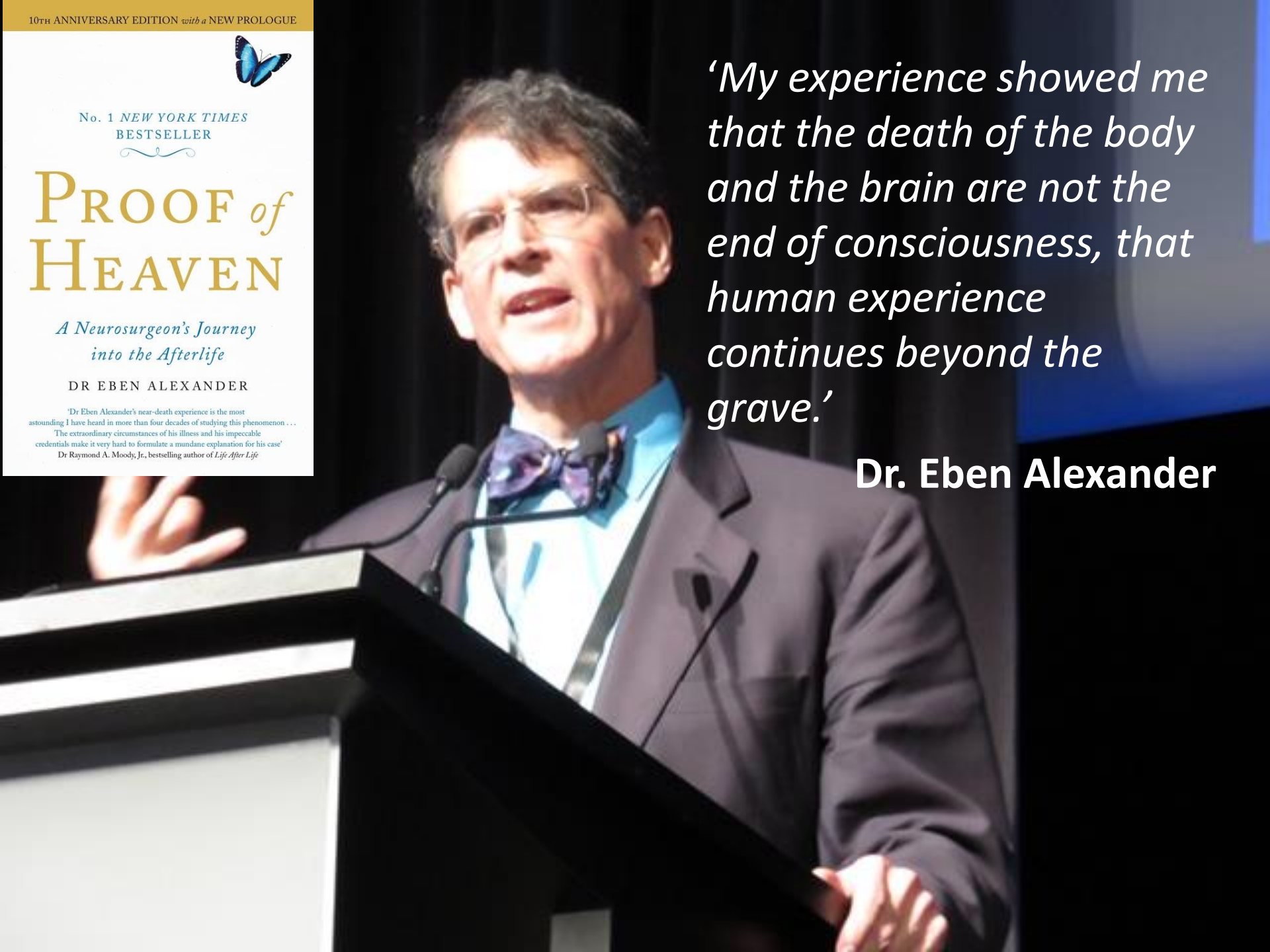
*A Neurosurgeon's Journey
into the Afterlife*

DR EBEN ALEXANDER

'Dr Eben Alexander's near-death experience is the most astounding I have heard in more than four decades of studying this phenomenon ...
'The extraordinary circumstances of his illness and his impeccable credentials make it very hard to formulate a mundane explanation for his case'
Dr Raymond A. Moody, Jr., bestselling author of *Life After Life*

'My experience showed me that the death of the body and the brain are not the end of consciousness, that human experience continues beyond the grave.'

Dr. Eben Alexander



How can we use NDEs to start spiritual conversations?

If even just one NDE was real – then what does that mean?

What do you think of NDEs? Are you persuaded by them? Why? If not, why not?

What do you make of the fact that NDEs have been documented around the world from people of different beliefs?

If NDE accounts are genuine, what do you think they mean? How do you interpret them?

- Is there a non-physical realm? A spiritual dimension? An after life?

What do you think about the fact that science might be able to point to spiritual realities as well as physical ones? Especially given the role of science in uncovering truth?

If God is real, why would he allow people to have NDEs? What kind of God might he be?

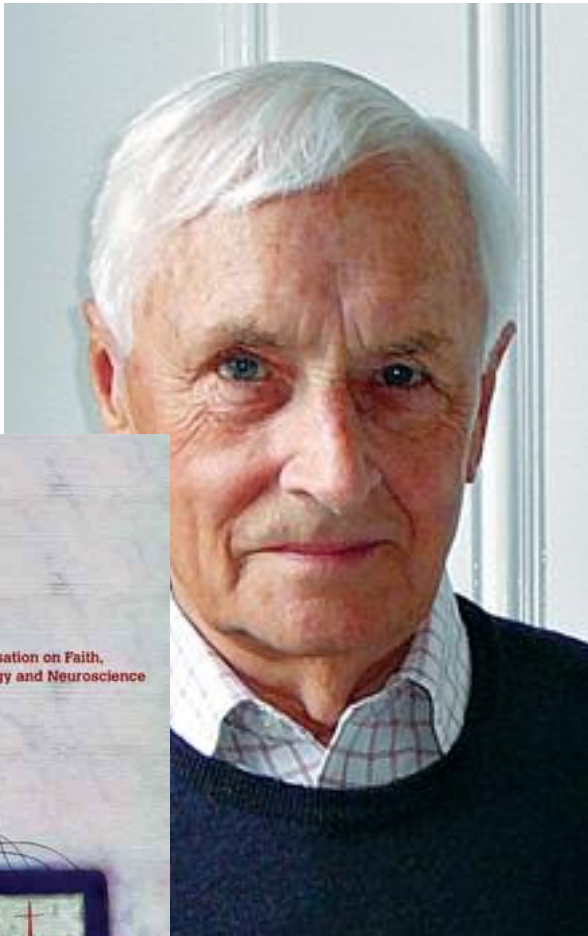
A grayscale image of a long, brightly lit tunnel. A person is walking away from the viewer towards a bright light at the end of the tunnel. The light creates a strong lens flare effect, with rays of light radiating from the center. The person's shadow is cast on the floor.

**Do NDEs provide evidence
for an after life?**

Concerns with NDEs

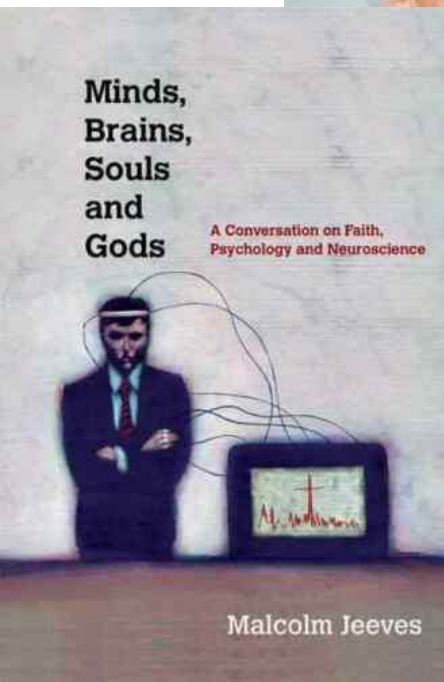
- Some neuroscientists & theologians claim a neural basis to NDEs – therefore they do not support evidence for an after life
- Eg. Paul caught up to the ‘third heaven’ 2 Cor 12:1-4
 - Joel Green – Fuller Theological Seminary
 - If Paul had an OOB (out-of-body) experience, he would have been certain
 - OOB experiences originate in our brains and highlight their complexity
 - Malcolm Jeeves – Professor of Psychology, St Andrews
 - How you interpret an NDE depends not just on your brain activity but also your tradition and beliefs.

Concern - Upon resurrection we will be embodied people not disembodied souls.



“So, watch this space! In the meantime, we shall continue to affirm, as in the Apostles’ Creed, our belief in resurrection: that as our human essence – our identity and consciousness – is embodied now, so in the resurrection we shall still be embodied, which is variously referred to as our ‘glorified’ bodies or our ‘spiritual’ bodies. But embodied. Not disembodied something-or-others drifting around in limbo. Not dependent on the dualisms of parapsychology and near-death experiences.”

Malcolm Jeeves, Minds, brains, souls and Gods.



Do NDE accounts of unconditional love and acceptance disagree with key Christian doctrines?

- Eternal life through belief in Jesus
- Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them. **John 3:36**

Response – Care needed in interpreting NDEs

- Available language and concepts to describe NDEs are limited
- Interpretations often reflect cultural understandings of the afterlife
- There is a difference between an experience approaching death and the beginning of eternity itself

Care is needed when interpreting NDEs

“... NDEs cannot be used to describe (or interpret) details concerning heaven or hell. Interpretation regarding heaven and hell and the identity of religious persons cannot be verified (on this side of the grave at least).” **Gary Habermas & J. P. Moreland, Beyond Death**

