

# Chris Carter's Challenge: Survival vs. Super-Psi

May 12, 2014 1:29 am · michaelsudduth



Empirical survivalists believe in life after death and also believe that there is observational data that provide evidence for this. Arguments for survival based on this alleged evidence are designated empirical arguments for survival. An important feature of these arguments is “ruling out” various explanatory competitors that attempt to account for the data in some way other than by postulating persons surviving death. This eliminative procedure is partly a consequence of the structure of most empirical survival arguments. The arguments typically maintain that certain empirical data are evidence for survival because the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data. The comparative strength of non-survival counter-explanations of the data thus becomes important to the internal logic of empirical survival arguments.

The most deeply entrenched and widely discussed explanatory competitor to the survival hypothesis is the living-agent psi hypothesis (hereafter, LAP hypothesis). According to this hypothesis, very roughly stated, psychic functioning among living persons (in the form of extra-sensory perception and psychokinesis) is proposed as an ostensible explanation of data otherwise seemingly explained by the survival hypothesis. In response, empirical survivalists have presented several arguments aimed at dismantling this proposed counter-explanation of the data. When, earlier this year, [Jime Sayaka interviewed me](#) on the topic of empirical arguments for postmortem survival, I critically addressed survivalist dismissals of the LAP hypothesis in some detail. In particular, I responded to a number of questions concerning survivalist Chris Carter's "challenge" to defenders of the LAP hypothesis.

Since my interview with Sayaka was quite dense, I'm going to use the present blog to summarize several of my criticisms of Carter's "challenge." It will come as no surprise to those familiar with my work that I don't think Carter has produced a substantial challenge to the LAP hypothesis or the super-sized version of it called "super-psi" or "super-ESP". In fact, Carter's "challenge" simply perpetuates in popular form much of what's wrong with the literature on survival at the conceptual level. I focus on Carter here, not because he offers anything unique or special in his critique of LAP counter-explanations; rather, he illustrates survivalist orthodoxy at this juncture, is something of a poster-boy for popular survivalist bloggers (such as [Michael Prescott](#)), I periodically receive emails from people asking me to respond to Carter's objections, and quite a few well-known parapsychologists have endorsed his work. While I have

personally commended Carter on some aspects of his work ([Sudduth 2011](#)), in the interest of advancing the empirical survival debate there's much that is also inadequate and merits rejection after critical scrutiny.

## **1. Carter's Critique of the Super-Psi Hypothesis**

To give context to Carter's specific critique of the so-called super-psi hypothesis, let's begin with a statement of what we might call the "orthodox position" concerning the LAP hypothesis among empirical survivalists.

Empirical survivalists have usually argued that the appeal to LAP fails because either (L1) the LAP hypothesis cannot account for some sub-set of the relevant data or (L2) the LAP hypothesis can account for the data in a robust way but only by being stretched into a "super-psi" hypothesis. "Super-psi" (or "Super-ESP" as Carter prefers to call it) refers to psychic functioning with a magnitude, potency, and/or refinement for which there appears no independent evidence, especially if we restrict the evidential domain to the results of laboratory-based psi experiments. The survivalist contention is that proposed explanations of the relevant empirical data in terms of super-psi is implausible. So empirical survivalists present something of a dilemma for those favorable towards LAP counter-explanations. Either ordinary-psi (i.e., "psi" for which the majority of parapsychologists suppose there *is* evidence) doesn't account for crucial bits of data, or super-psi, though it could account for the data, is implausible since it lacks independent evidential support. So the LAP defender must choose between a hypothesis that either doesn't account for the data or doesn't account for the data in a plausible manner.

[Jime Sayaka interviewed Chris Carter](#) (for the second time) in 2013. In the interview Carter provided a concise summary of his

argument against the LAP hypothesis, an argument he presented in his most recent book *Science and the Afterlife Experience: Evidence for the Immortality of Consciousness* (Inner Traditions, 2013). Most empirical survivalists, and Carter is no exception here, think it's fairly clear that ordinary-psi cannot account for salient strands of evidence. Hence, Carter speaks of "ESP of the *required* power and range" (emphasis mine). So survivalists tend to devote most of their energy to refuting the super-psi version of the LAP hypothesis.

Now I've argued elsewhere (Sudduth 2013a, 2013b) that survivalists have not adequately grounded the ostensible *requirement* that psi be of a greater magnitude, potency, or refinement than ordinary-psi in order to pose a problem for survival arguments. In this I'm preceded by and indebted to the high caliber work of philosopher Stephen Braude (2003). Part of the problem is that survivalists operate with an implausibly narrow conception of how living-agent psi would challenge empirical arguments for survival, and this is often further based on a weak grasp of the content of the LAP hypothesis. I've tried to show how ordinary-psi does indeed pose a challenge to classical empirical survival arguments. This is particularly acute when survival arguments are formulated along Bayesian lines and propose a conclusion about the net plausibility of the survival hypothesis based on the extent to which the survival hypothesis leads us to expect the data, the extent to which the data are otherwise not to be expected, and the initial credibility of the survival hypothesis.

That being said, here I'm going to focus on the second horn of the dilemma above, specifically Carter's "challenge" to those open to or favorable towards counter-explanations of the relevant data in

terms of super-psi, or at least who—like myself—think that it significantly reduces the strength of empirical survival arguments.

Carter provided the following comments on the super-ESP hypothesis in [his interview with Jime Sayaka \(3/1/13\)](#):

*Now, actually, what I said in my book was this: 'Evidence for the existence of ESP of the required power and range is practically nonexistent. Defenders of the super-ESP hypothesis are hard-pressed to find any such examples – outside of cases of apparent communication from the deceased.' And so defenders of the super-PSI hypothesis have not challenged that objection, but have simply agreed with my statement.*

*The fact that they cannot find any such cases demonstrates the purely ad hoc nature of the super-ESP 'explanation,' because of the utter lack of any independent evidence for super-ESP. If super-ESP as an explanation is to be scientific, then it would predict the demonstration of such wide-ranging, virtually-unlimited powers in instances in which we are not dealing with evidence of apparent survival.*

*If the function of super-ESP is the use of its virtually unlimited powers by the subconscious mind to surreptitiously protect us from the fear of death by fabricating elaborate evidence that seems in every respect exactly as if the deceased are visiting or communicating, then why don't we have evidence of our subconscious minds employing these vast powers to protect us from the actual threat of imminent death? That would at least provide a more plausible evolutionary reason for the existence of these vast powers.*

*Instead of offering any such evidence, these 'recent defenders of the Super-ESP hypothesis' simply agree that there is no independent evidence, apart from the cases apparently offering prima facie evidence of survival. This means that their "argument" is not an argument at all;*

*rather, it is nothing more than the purely dogmatic assertion that cases of evidence for survival must be cases of super-ESP, period.*

*The fact that they cannot come up with any such independent evidence shows that what they propose is pseudo-science, pure and simple.*

Carter's main claims are:

(C1) There's no evidence for super-psi outside cases otherwise suggestive of survival.

(C2) The super-ESP hypothesis would lead us to expect that such evidence would exist.

(C3) The super-ESP hypothesis is pseudo-science.

He argues (C3) on the basis of (C1).

Furthermore, he at least *appears* to suggest that

(C4) The super-psi hypothesis is refuted by observational data, and this on the basis of (C1) and (C2) together.

## **2. Response to Carter's Criticisms**

While Carter has a good grasp of the general history of parapsychology, this is unfortunately outweighed by significant conceptual weaknesses that vitiate his treatment of the empirical survival debate and its interface with parapsychology. In particular, like many other survivalists, Carter presents no logically rigorous formulation of the *argument* for survival from the purported evidence. This lack of rigor results in an unfortunate masking of deficiencies in his defense of the survival hypothesis against deeply-entrenched objections, especially those concerning counter-explanations of the relevant data in terms of living-agent psi.

So let me pull together in a semi-condensed form what I've argued for a number of years now in response to Carter's "orthodox" survivalist critique of the appeal to living-agent psi. I'll try to list these in a rough order of significance, beginning

with what I consider the two most significant problems. Since this is intended as a summary, I don't develop my main criticisms in any detail, but I have provided links to my publications and ongoing writing where the arguments are developed in considerable detail.

(1) Like most empirical survivalists, Carter overlooks how the survival hypothesis, if useful as a testable, explanatory hypothesis, requires supplementation with various auxiliary hypotheses that render it vulnerable to the same criticism he raises against the super-psi hypothesis, namely lack of independent support. I initially drew attention to Carter's failure to acknowledge the role of auxiliary hypotheses in my review of his book on near-death experiences ([Sudduth 2011](#)). I've since developed the point at length by showing that the survival hypothesis has no predictive or explanatory power unless it's supplemented with a large number of auxiliary hypotheses ([Sudduth 2013a](#), [2013b](#), [2014a](#), [2014b](#)). The same is true with respect to the appeal to living-agent psi. From this vantage point, "super-psi" is simply the appeal to living-agent psi supplemented with further assumptions about the magnitude, efficacy, and refinement of psychic functioning among living persons. These auxiliary hypotheses are arguably (presently) lacking independent support, but the same is true for the auxiliary hypotheses required for the survival hypothesis to account for the data. In fact, in [Sudduth 2009](#) I argued that among such auxiliary hypotheses in cases of mediumship would be discarnate/deceased psi of roughly the same magnitude, potency, or refinement as required by the living-agent psi hypothesis. Hence, by parity of reasoning, if lack of independent

support diminishes the plausibility of the super-psi hypothesis, so much the worse for the survival hypothesis.

(2) In the absence of a clear and moderately rigorous formulation of the empirical argument for survival, it's wholly unclear how the absence of independent support for the super-psi hypothesis deflates the potential defeating power of this alternative explanation of the data. In other words, we need to know quite a bit more about the logic of survival arguments, a lot more than Carter provides in either his interviews or publications to date, and this includes a serious engagement with competing principles of evidence assessment. Labeling the super-psi hypothesis as "non-argument," "dogmatic," or "pseudo-science" is a poor substitute for critically exploring crucial concepts in confirmation theory and applying them to the empirical case for survival. For instance, I've argued elsewhere ([2014a](#)), that lack of independent support for a hypothesis is not relevant when survivalist arguments are developed along Likelihoodist\* lines, but it does gain significance in Bayesian formulations of survival arguments, specifically as a determinant of prior probability. However, even in the latter case, it's unclear whether the survival hypothesis enjoys any advantage here, especially if the survival hypothesis is treated in its robust form, with an array of required untestable auxiliary hypotheses.

(3) As I argued in [2013b](#), if there is evidence for psychic functioning of *any* sort, this would pose an important challenge to the survival hypothesis, at least if survival arguments are designed to show that the survival hypothesis leads us to expect data that are *otherwise improbable*. So there is a sense in which so-called "super-psi" is an overblown issue that has actually distracted from the central issues in the debate. And Braude

(2003) has similarly argued that the designation “super-psi” is itself misleading. Hence, Braude and I each prefer the designation “living-agent psi.” More importantly, though, my more recent criticisms (2014a, 2014b) show that the survival hypothesis is crucially challenged even if there are *no* plausible explanatory competitors. Survivalists who assume that the survival hypothesis wins by default do no better than theists who maintain that God explains the existence or fundamental features of the universe because nothing else does. Show me how the favored hypothesis leads us to expect the relevant data, what else must be assumed for this predictive consequence to obtain, and whether the required auxiliary assumptions are independently testable. This is *my* challenge to survivalists.

(4a) Carter says super-psi is “pseudo-scientific,” but at the same time he suggests that there’s an actual observation that falsifies it, namely the *alleged* fact that there’s no evidence for it outside the cases otherwise suggestive of survival. I find this baffling. Falsifiability is usually considered a necessary condition of scientific reasoning. While this doesn’t preclude other demarcation criteria, independent support is not sensibly one of them (even though it is relevant to judgments of prior probability in Bayesian style arguments). There may be little in the way of independent support for the hypothesis that there’s a particular planet of a certain mass, orbiting at a certain distance from its host star, but the hypothesis has something going for it epistemically if it makes a highly specific observational prediction and this prediction is confirmed. It’s hardly pseudo-science because it lacks independent support. To be sure, independent support would be logical icing on the epistemic cake, but it’s not as if the hypothesis is without any scientifically situated epistemic

merit in its absence. Similarly, while ad hoc hypotheses frequently do not have independent support, lack of independent support does not entail that a hypothesis is ad hoc, as theorizing in contemporary extra-solar planetary science demonstrates.

(4b) As for Carter's suggested falsification of the super-psi hypothesis, what this demonstrates is just how easy it is to adopt auxiliary assumptions that, together with a core hypothesis, lead us to expect something contrary to our observations. But unless there is independent support for the auxiliary hypothesis, we simply don't know whether our observations falsify the core hypothesis or the auxiliary hypothesis. This is a straightforward consequence of the Duhem-Quine thesis according to which the testing of empirical hypotheses requires testing sets of statements, not a single statement. But here's the catch: does Carter know enough about either psi or hypothetical super-psi to say just what it would predict in the way of observational evidence? I doubt it, and at all events, he's presented no argument to alleviate this concern. There are many possible motivational factors that can in principle be adopted in conjunction with a super-psi hypothesis and that would conjointly yield very different kinds of predictions. Carter listed only one such possible motivation, but his suggestion is purely conjectural. In the absence of independent support for his assumption, a defender of the so-called "super-psi hypothesis" can reasonably take the failed prediction to falsify Carter's auxiliary hypothesis instead of the super-psi hypothesis itself.

Having said this, I'm inclined to think that the so-called super-psi hypothesis is not a scientific hypothesis in the first place, but not for any reason Carter cites. The problem is that it only leads us to expect the relevant observational data once we adopt various

additional assumptions whose independent testability is, if possible at all, considerably more problematic than most scientific hypotheses. And this is precisely why it's easy, as Carter's argument illustrates, to make assumptions that produce ostensible refutations of the hypothesis. The observation that Pandas have an inefficient 'thumb' (i.e., spur bone extending from the Panda's wrist) refutes the existence of God if I further assume that if God were to exist, he would have wanted to make a universe where Pandas had a more efficient 'thumb' for collecting food. Similarly, the same observation confirms the existence of God if we assume that God would have wanted the Panda to have a highly inefficient anatomy for collecting food.

So I think we should reject the assumption that super-psi is a scientific hypothesis in the first place. While some parapsychologists may regard it as such, I see no good reason for this view, in which case labeling it "pseudo-scientific" is a category mistake, like calling metaphysics or ethics pseudo-scientific. And I'm inclined to think the same verdict needs to be rendered concerning the survival hypothesis. It's no more "scientific" than the super-psi hypothesis.

(5) Carter says that there's no evidence for super-psi outside the cases otherwise suggestive of survival, and that defenders of the super-psi hypothesis concede this point. It's not clear who these "recent defenders" are supposed to be, but both claims are problematic, if not unwarranted.

First, Stephen Braude—the most capable contemporary defender of the super-psi hypothesis—has argued in detail in two books (1997, 2002) that there is indeed evidence for so-called 'super-psi.'

In these works, Braude presented a number of arguments based on experimental, semi-experimental, and spontaneous case

empirical data for supposing that living-agent psi is broad in magnitude (including both small-scale and large-scale phenomena), extremely potent, and refined in its operation (often combining multiple psi processes and resistant to task complexity). In a third book (2003), Braude applied its relevance to evaluating the force of survival arguments. In [Sudduth 2009](#), I argued for a related way of maintaining that there is independent evidence for the super-psi hypothesis. This was based on distinguishing between a core hypothesis of living-agent psi (for which many survivalists including Carter claim there is evidence) and plausible auxiliary hypotheses that augment or qualify the core conception. To date, Carter had not critically engaged these arguments.

Second, like other survivalists, Carter assumes that if super-ESP were real, then it should be some sort of obvious datum of experience. Braude has identified this as the implausible “sore thumb” assumption (2003: 12-13). But to push the matter further, Carter fails to state what evidence for super-ESP outside cases of survival would actually look like. Why should we suppose that super-ESP would produce conspicuous results or results distinguishable from events grounded in ordinary causal chains in the world? Would it be distinguishable from the evidence survivalists take as indicative of survival? And if so, how so? Unless we antecedently know the answers here, we don’t know whether phenomena allegedly suggestive of survival are instances of *survival* evidence or whether they are evidence of *an important extension of LAP*. Otherwise put, in asking for instances of super-psi outside “cases of survival,” Carter is privileging a survivalist interpretation of the phenomena whose source is precisely what is at issue. His request simply begs the question.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

Carter raises the standard objections to appeals to living-agent psi as a potential counter-explanation of the data otherwise suggestive of survival. These objections give an appearance of force because they're inserted into a dialectical context lacking adequate clarity on the formal features of the empirical argument for survival. Consequently, the problems inherent in such arguments are masked rather than critically engaged and the arguments defended with even modest logical rigor. I think this also explains why survivalists have by and large not advanced the empirical survival debate since philosophers such as C.J. Ducasse and C.D. Broad laid the conceptual foundations for these arguments in the 1960s. Like advocates of design arguments for the existence of God during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, survivalists have mastered the skill of creating increasingly large compendia of empirical data but they've made little progress at the more challenging conceptual and theoretical task of critically assessing competing explanations of the data. The central problem facing empirical arguments for survival is simply not empirical in nature.

#### Notes

\*From a Likelihoodist approach to confirmation theory, whether evidence favors hypothesis  $h_1$  over  $h_2$  depends solely on whether  $e$  is more to be expected given  $h_1$  than given  $h_2$ , technically stated, whether  $\Pr(e|h_1) > \Pr(e|h_2)$ . A student walking down the hall from the Philosophy Department with three philosophy books in his hand favors the hypothesis that the student is a philosophy major over the hypothesis that the student is a biology major because the observational evidence is more likely

given the former hypothesis than given the latter hypothesis. Whether there is independent support for either hypothesis is not relevant to deciding which hypothesis the evidence favors, confirms, or supports. Now, of course, the Likelihoodist approach doesn't tell us which hypothesis is likely to be true, and therefore it doesn't tell us which hypothesis to accept or believe. It only tells us which of two or more hypotheses a body of evidence favors or supports. But the point here is that if I'm a Likelihoodist, I can make sense of the relevant data *favoring* the super-psi hypothesis over the survival hypothesis, even if super-psi lacks independent support.

#### References:

- Braude, S. (1997). *The Limits of Influence: Psychokinesis and the Philosophy of Science*. Revised Edition. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Braude, S. (2002). *ESP and Psychokinesis: A Philosophical Examination*. Revised Edition. Parkland: Brown Walker Press.
- Braude, S. (2003). *Immortal Remains*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Carter, C. (2010). *Science and the Near-Death Experience*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
- Carter, C. (2012). *Science and the Afterlife Experience: Evidence for the Immortality of Consciousness*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
- Sudduth, M. (2009). "Super-Psi and the Survivalist Interpretation of Mediumship." *The Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 23:2, 167-193.
- Sudduth, M. (2011). "Review of Chris Carter, *Science and the Near-Death Experience: How Consciousness Survives Death*." *Journal of Parapsychology*, 75:1.

Sudduth, M. (2013a). "A Critical Response to David Lund's Argument for Postmortem Survival." *The Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 27:2, 277-316.

Sudduth, M. (2013b). "Is Survival the Best Explanation of the Data of Mediumship?" in Adam Rock, *The Survival Hypothesis: Essays on Mediumship*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Inc. Company.

Sudduth, M. (2014a). "Getting Sober about Survival," Sudduth Blog at [michaelsudduth.com](http://michaelsudduth.com/getting-sober-about-survival-part-2-of-3/) <http://michaelsudduth.com/getting-sober-about-survival-part-2-of-3/>

Sudduth, M. (2014b). "Getting Sober about Survival," Sudduth Blog at [michaelsudduth.com](http://michaelsudduth.com/getting-sober-about-survival-part-3-of-3/) <http://michaelsudduth.com/getting-sober-about-survival-part-3-of-3/>.

---

## **Interview on Postmortem Survival (Part 3) – repost**

December 3, 2014 3:10 am · [michaelsudduth](#)



*In January 2013 Jime Sayaka interviewed me on the topic of postmortem survival for his now defunct blog [Subversive Thinking](#). In what turned out to be a lengthy interview (and preview of arguments in my forthcoming book), I outlined in considerable detail my critique of empirical arguments for survival, as well as explained why common survivalist defenses of these arguments lack cogency. Below I repost my responses to questions #5 through #8. **Question #5** concerns Chris Carter's contention that the survival hypothesis is the most natural inference from the relevant data. **Question #6** concerns the strength of counter-explanations of the data in terms of psychic functioning among living persons. **Question #7** concerns Chris Carter's "silver bullet" objection to appeals to living-agent psi to explain the relevant data. **Question #8** addresses the alleged ad hoc nature of appeals to living-agent psi as a counter-explanation. Note that in my responses I rely on symbolism used in confirmation theory to provide a formal account of various logical relations between evidence and hypotheses.*

**5 – Sayaka: Survivalists like Chris Carter and others suggest that survival of consciousness is the most natural, obvious and straightforward inference from the empirical data from**

**mediumship, near-death experiences and reincarnation type cases. What do you think of this argument?**

**Sudduth:** I'm not inclined to dispute the claim. I think the claim is entirely compatible with my central thesis and the premises of my central argument. Many theists say that the existence of God is the most natural, obvious, and straightforward inference from the fine-tuning of the universe. And it is . . . to them. I'm quite sure that for Carter and many other survivalists the survival inference is natural, obvious, and straightforward. However, as in the case of proposed theistic explanations of the existence and regularities of the universe, the obviousness of the inference lies in the (often unspoken and unconscious) adoption of a whole array of background assumptions. As a philosopher, I'm interested in identifying these assumptions and assessing their role in the inference to survival, and this is in the interest of ultimately evaluating the cogency and strength of survival arguments. That the survival inference is natural, obvious, and straightforward to lots of people is a psychological truth that really isn't relevant to the kind of question that is central in the empirical survival debate.

**6 - Sayaka:** You have argued that the super-PSI explanation of the data is adequate, if not most adequate, than the survival hypothesis. Can you explain briefly the super-PSI hypothesis and why is it so good as an alternative explanation for the data?

**Sudduth:** I don't believe I've argued that the super-psi explanation is adequate, much less most adequate or good. In fact, I've explicitly stated in a few publications now that we

should dispense with talk of “super-psi” altogether and simply utilize the language of “living-agent psi,” with the further caveat that such a hypothesis may appear in more or less robust forms depending on the range of auxiliary hypotheses added to it. My view is that appeals to robust living-agent psi hypotheses are *no less adequate* or *no less plausible* than the survival hypothesis, at least when these hypotheses are compared in their robust forms and we’re considering a maximal data set, not just narrow strands of data. It’s quite another matter to say that either explanation is adequate, much less good.

I suppose I should say something here about strategies for critiquing arguments, as there seems to be confusion in some of the literature as to what it takes to defeat survival arguments. If the argument for survival depends on the premise that the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data, to defeat the argument I only need to show that the survivalist is not justified in asserting the premise. One way to accomplish this is to show that the premise is false, to show that survival is not the best explanation of the data. Of course, to do this it’s not necessary to show that there is some rival hypothesis that *better* explains the data. It would suffice to show that there is some rival hypothesis that is *at least as good* as the survival hypothesis in leading us to expect the data. However, another way to show that the survivalist is not justified in claiming superior explanatory power on behalf of the survival hypothesis is simply to show that the survivalist is not justified in supposing that this premise is true, which is different from showing that the premise is false. There are defeaters that constitute overriding reasons for supposing that a statement is false (rebutting

defeaters) and there are defeaters that remove or otherwise neutralize reasons for supposing that a statement is true (undercutting defeaters). This distinction is frequently lost sight of in the debate.

I maintain that empirical survivalists are not justified in claiming that the survival hypothesis is the best explanation of the data. More precisely stated, I maintain that empirical survivalists are not justified in claiming that the survival hypothesis leads us to expect data that are otherwise unlikely, or even less likely given the nearest robust competitors. Now I do believe that there are reasons for supposing that there are nearby explanatory competitors that are at least as adequate at survival, or no less adequate if you will. My position involves a parity thesis, and the argument is a parity argument. And this is one way to show that the survival hypothesis is not the best explanation of the data. However, I also maintain, more modestly, that survivalists have not presented good enough reasons for supposing that the survival hypothesis is the superior explanation of the data. If we're comparing robust versions of the survival hypothesis and living-agent psi hypothesis, then I don't think survivalists have effectively argued that the data are more to be expected given robust survival than given the nearest robust competitors, for example something like Stephen Braude's motivated living-agent psi hypothesis.

But let me give a more technical elaboration here. Let  $C$  = the nearest robust competitor,  $S$  = robust survival hypothesis, and  $D_{MAX}$  = a maximal data set. In that case, I argue:

(1) Survivalists have not presented good enough reasons to believe that  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S) > \Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C)$ , much less that  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S) \gg \Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C)$ .

[Editorial Comment:  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S)$  means "the probability of the maximal data set given the survival hypothesis." Hence, the whole expression states "the probability of the maximal data set given the survival hypothesis is greater than the probability of the maximal data set given the nearest robust competitor. Since " $\gg$ " means much greater, the second expression is a stronger one.]

(2) There are overriding reasons for supposing that  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S) \leq \Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C)$ .

[Editorial Comment: this expression says "the probability of the maximal data set given the survival hypothesis is less than or equal to the probability of the maximal data set given the nearest robust competitor.]

To be clear, we are here concerned with a comparative probability of the data given each of the competing hypotheses. This is the posterior probability of *the evidence* [ $\Pr(e/h)$ ], not to be confused with the posterior probability of the hypothesis [ $\Pr(h/e)$ ]. Following the common practice in confirmation theory I'll refer to such posterior probabilities as "likelihoods," and by extension the "likelihood of a hypothesis" will refer to the extent to which a hypothesis renders the evidence or data probable. (The likelihood of a hypothesis is distinct from the probability of a hypothesis, as the latter refers to the extent to which the evidence renders the *hypothesis* probable). So my view with respect to the living-agent psi hypothesis is that I don't think survivalists have really shown that the survival hypothesis has a likelihood superior to a

sufficiently robust living-agent psi hypothesis, at least not if the data set has sufficiently broad parameters. More strongly stated, my view is that the likelihood of the survival hypothesis is less than or equal to the likelihood of the nearest robust competitor.

It's important to underscore here that the argument for supposing that  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S) \leq \Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C)$  does not require the stronger claim that  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C) > \Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S)$ . My position is also compatible with the following survivalist claim:  $\Pr(D_{\text{MIN}}/S) > \Pr(D_{\text{MIN}}/C)$ , where  $D_{\text{MIN}}$  = a more restricted data set. So I work out my position in a way that is actually sensitive to the evidence-parameters problem. Nonetheless, as I see it, (1) and (2) severally suffice to defeat the empirical argument for survival, at least to the extent to which the empirical argument depends on attributing to the survival hypothesis a superior likelihood over competitors. So this will apply to Bayesian survival arguments that make use of likelihoods for the purposes of showing that the survival hypothesis is more probable than not. It will also apply to Likelihoodist versions of the empirical argument for survival that are more modest in their pretensions, aiming only to show that the evidence (strongly) favors the survival hypothesis over the competitors solely on the grounds that the survival hypothesis has a superior likelihood.

It should be clear that the kind of comparative "adequacy" I've been focusing on here concerns "likelihoods" but of course many survivalists regard counter-explanations, such as the robust versions of the living-agent psi hypothesis, as (comparatively) inadequate for reasons other than those that bear on likelihoods. For instance, many survivalists reject robust versions

of the living-agent psi hypothesis because of its lack of independent testability and increased complexity. Since I regard these issues as determinants of prior probability (rather than explanatory power), I would parse the frequently encountered survivalist objection as maintaining that robust living-agent psi hypotheses have a lower prior probability than the survival hypothesis. So the survivalist would presumably be claiming that  $\Pr(S/K) > \Pr(C/K)$  because C is more complex than S, fits less well with background knowledge, and we have no independent evidence for C (or some auxiliary contained in C). Of course, on my analysis of priors, I think that  $\Pr(S/K) \leq \Pr(C/K)$ , at least if S and C refer to robust versions of survival and the nearest competitor and the background knowledge is what interlocutors in the debate typically include, e.g., scientific knowledge.

**7 - Sayaka:** Chris Carter has argued forcefully against the super-PSI hypothesis (or super-ESP, as some calls it). For example, he says *"Evidence for the existence of ESP of the required power and range is practically nonexistent. Defenders of the super-ESP hypothesis are hard-pressed to find any such examples - outside of cases of apparent communication from the deceased."* According to Carter, no defender of super-PSI has ever been able to challenge this objection. What do you think of this objection?

**Sudduth:** It's the stock in trade of empirical survivalists to reject appeals to super-psi on the grounds that this hypothesis lacks "independent support." Stephen Braude has challenged this objection for a number of years, and I present an argument

against it in a forthcoming paper in [The Survival Hypothesis: Essays on Mediumship](#), ed. Adam Rock (McFarland, 2014). An earlier draft of the paper in question, "[Is Survival the Best Explanation of Mediumship?](#)", is available on my professional website [michaelsudduth.com](http://michaelsudduth.com). Let me outline some of the salient points that I think significantly weaken the force of this objection.

First, from a Likelihoodist approach to confirmation theory, whether evidence favors hypothesis  $h_1$  over  $h_2$  depends solely on whether  $e$  is more to be expected given  $h_1$  than given  $h_2$ , technically stated, whether  $\Pr(e/h_1) > \Pr(e/h_2)$ . A student walking down the hall from the Philosophy Department with three philosophy books in his hand favors the hypothesis that the student is a philosophy major over the hypothesis that the student is a biology major because the observational evidence is more likely given the former hypothesis than given the latter hypothesis. Whether there is independent support for either hypothesis is not relevant to deciding which hypothesis the evidence favors, confirms, or supports. Now of course, the Likelihoodist approach doesn't tell us which hypothesis is likely to be true, and therefore it doesn't tell us which hypothesis to accept or believe. It only tells us which of two or more hypotheses a body of evidence favors or supports. But the point here is that if I'm a Likelihoodist, I can make sense of the relevant data *favoring* the super-psi hypothesis over the survival hypothesis, even if super-psi lacks independent support.

Now the apparent shortcoming of my proposed Likelihoodist defense of the super-psi hypothesis is that lack of independent support may nonetheless be salient to our overall assessment of a

hypothesis, and if we want to compare the survival hypothesis and its competitors, we might want to inquire about more than their comparative likelihoods. For example, the hypothesis that a very powerful demon intended me to pick the ace of spades has a higher likelihood than the hypothesis that my selection of the card was random, for the former hypothesis makes the selection of the card very probable and the latter makes it very improbable. But the fact that the evidence favors the demon hypothesis here does not make the hypothesis very probable all things considered, and the crucial issue here, if we don't have good evidence against the existence of such an entity, is quite plausibly that the demon hypothesis lacks independent support. More generally stated, the demon hypothesis has a very low prior probability, and this is due in large part to the fact that it lacks independent support.

Now this point is significant from the vantage point of a possible defense of the empirical argument for survival. Let's suppose that  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S\&K) = \Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C\&K)$ . That is, the predictive power or likelihoods of S and C are equivalent. The survival hypothesis might still have a greater posterior probability than C (maybe even be more probable than not) if its prior probability is greater, especially if the prior probability is much greater. From a Bayesian viewpoint, if  $\Pr(e/h1\&k) = \Pr(e/h2\&k)$ , then  $\Pr(h1/e\&k) > \Pr(h2/e\&k)$  just if  $\Pr(h1/k) > \Pr(h2/k)$ . That is to say, if two hypotheses have equal predictive power (or likelihoods), then the evidence and background knowledge confers a greater probability on h1 than h2 just if h1's prior probability is greater than h2's prior probability. So a survivalist might simply argue that, worst case scenario,  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S\&K) =$

$\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C\&K)$ , but since  $\Pr(S/K) \gg \Pr(C/K)$ , the survival hypothesis has a greater posterior probability, maybe it's still more probable than not. To put this otherwise, a survivalist might argue that the net effect of deflating the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis on the grounds of co-equal likelihoods is negligible since the prior probability of the survival hypothesis is much greater.

I think this counter-argument would work if we were comparing the priors of "C" and a *simple* survival hypothesis, but as I've already argued, the explanatory candidates must be compared in their robust forms because simple survival has no explanatory power. If the survivalist tries to shift to a simple survival hypothesis to inflate the prior probability of the survival hypothesis, this will deflate the explanatory power of the survival hypothesis. It will follow that  $\Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/C\&K) \gg \Pr(D_{\text{MAX}}/S\&K)$ . But, unfortunately for the survivalist, if "lack of independent support" drives down the prior probability of the appeal to so-called super-psi, it will also drive down the prior probability of the robust survival hypothesis since it also depends on a broad range of auxiliary hypotheses for which there is no independent support. More generally, if "lack of independent support" is a defect of robust living-agent psi hypotheses, it will also be a defect of the robust living agent psi hypothesis. So there's no advantage to be had here for the survival hypothesis. As I noted above, on my analysis,  $\Pr(S/K) \leq \Pr(C/K)$ , if "S" refers to a robust survival hypothesis.

Finally, the problem for the survivalist is exacerbated since the auxiliary assumptions required by the survival hypothesis (to

have predictive power) includes an auxiliary hypothesis that attributes super-psi to discarnate persons (and possibly also living agents). As Gauld, Braude, Emily Williams Kelly, and I have each argued, the survival hypothesis itself is committed to the existence of ESP of a required power and range examples of which survivalists would be hard pressed to find outside cases of apparent communications from the deceased. As I argued my 2009 paper "[Super-Psi and the Survivalist Interpretation of Mediumship](#)," if the communications attributed to the deceased in paradigmatic cases of mediumship are really from the deceased, they too have extraordinary powers of knowledge acquisition, often requiring that they telepathically or clairvoyantly mine information from multiple sources. It's only the unwarranted assumption that death increases the potency of psi, or some such other speculative assumption, that allows survivalists to think that they are immune from this objection to super-psi. But of course, they're merely taking refuge in a further assumption for which there is no independent evidence.

But there's another part of Carter's objection of which I'm suspicious, namely the demand to produce examples of ESP of the "required" power and range outside cases of survival.

First, why is there a *requirement* that psi be super-psi in order to deflate the explanatory superiority of the survival hypothesis? Empirical survivalists routinely assert this, but Braude has shown that the assertion rests on various implausible assumptions. Moreover, I've discussed in detail why appeals to living-agent psi challenge the survival hypothesis without requiring an appeal to super-psi. See my the previously

mentioned forthcoming “Is Survival the Best Explanation of Mediumship?” and my “A Critical Response to David Lund’s Argument for Postmortem Survival” (*Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 2013, 27: 277-316).

Second, I don’t know what kind of evidence would count as clear evidence for super-psi but not be capable of being construed as evidence for survival by empirical survivalists. You may recall that back in the 1970s the Philip Group produced ostensible living-agent psychokinetic effects that resembled the phenomena of physical mediumship, complete with messages from a “deceased personality” named Philip. Philip was a fictional person created by the group of experimenters, and his ostensible communications through raps and knocks corresponded to the details of the fictional biography created by members of the group. Yet David Fontana gave the Philip Group phenomena a survivalist interpretation by positing an earthbound spirit intent on fooling the group by masquerading as their fictional character Philip. (See Fontana, *Is There An Afterlife?* 2005, p. 112). Well, of course. If there were some earthbound spirit with such an intention and the power to carry out his deception, we would expect to find the evidence associated with the Philip Group experiments. By parity of reasoning, the hypothesis that a malicious and powerful demon wanted me to select the ace of spades I drew from the deck of cards renders my draw quite probable, certainly more probable than the alternative hypothesis that my draw was completely random. You see, you can select any datum and adopt a hypothesis that renders the datum very probable or more probable than it would be given competing hypotheses. The difficulty in meeting the survivalist challenge to

produce evidence for super-psi outside cases of survival may not be the absence of such evidence, but the survivalist proclivity to see such evidence where it arises as evidence for survival. Since what counts as a case of *survival* is precisely what's in dispute by the parties in the debate, the challenge begs the question.

And of course the previous point highlights the final problem with Carter's objection. Although it's not clear what would count as unambiguous evidence for living-agent super-psi (vs. survival), what is clear is that no empirical survivalist has met the challenge to provide independent support for the dozen or so required auxiliary hypotheses required for survival to have predictive efficacy. And *this* request does not beg the question. It's simply another instance of the general requirement imposed by Carter himself with respect to the super-psi hypothesis. What Carter and other survivalists who take his position need to do is (i) explicitly acknowledge the content or range of the assumptions required for survival to yield likelihoods (of the evidence) that exceed the likelihoods (of the evidence) given rival hypotheses and (ii) provide independent support for as many of these auxiliary hypotheses as they can. Until this can be done, the empirical case for survival has not been worked out with adequate logical rigor, and it certainly does not deserve to be considered a genuine scientific or even quasi-scientific hypothesis.

**8 - Sayaka: In connection with the above objection, survivalists suggest that the super-PSI hypothesis is ad hoc, because of the lack of any independent evidence for super-PSI, besides the putative cases of survival. (It's like arguing that the**

reincarnation type cases are best explained by extraterrestrials implanting false memories, without having any independent evidence for the existence of aliens, a point pressed by philosopher Robert Almeder in his response to atheist philosopher Steven Hales). Some survivalist consider this to be the most crushing objection against super-PSI. What's your reply?

**Sudduth:** Given what I have argued above, if this objection is a crushing objection against the super-psi hypothesis, it's also a crushing objection to the survival hypothesis, in which case the survivalist is hoisted by his own petard. As I've already noted, the simple supposition of survival makes no specific predictions, much less does it predict any of the fine-grained features of the actual data, unless it's supplemented by auxiliary assumptions of a wide-ranging sort. Hence, the lack of independent support objection is just as applicable to the robust survival hypothesis as it is to the super-psi hypothesis. Even if we assume that there is independent evidence for survival, there would also have to be independent evidence for the range of auxiliary assumptions needed for the survival hypothesis to have predictive power. Almeder has not provided this independent support, nor have other survivalists.

So why aren't the auxiliary hypotheses employed by the survivalist ad hoc in nature? I noted above that among such auxiliary hypotheses would be the attribution of super-psi to discarnate persons. Well, then, if the super-psi hypothesis is ad hoc, so also is the survival hypothesis since it must rely on super-psi assumptions, or further assumptions whose only purpose for

being invoked is that they would lead us to expect discarnate persons to have greatly enhanced cognitive and causal powers. But take another example, this time from Almeder. He argues that if reincarnation is true, then we would expect to find people with past life memories, which Almeder says is confirmed by the fact that people claim to have past life memories. Setting aside that this is not a specific prediction, Almeder makes it clear that what sanctions the prediction here is the psychological criterion of personal identity. So here's an admission of an auxiliary hypothesis, but clearly more needs to be assumed because we would have to account for a potentially disconfirming datum, to wit, many people appear to have no past life memories.

There are, of course, many auxiliary hypotheses we could introduce here so that the reincarnation hypothesis was consistent with the facts: people remember past lives but claim they don't, people don't recall their past lives because they possess them in the form of repressed memories, their last reincarnation was as a non-human and their memories were erased (perhaps memories only pass from human to human incarnations), they will eventually recall their past life at some point in their present life, or people with no past life memories are living their first life. It doesn't matter which of these we select, or none. The point here is that a reincarnation hypothesis requires that we build into it assumptions that are no less ad hoc than the ones needed by an extra-terrestrial hypothesis. And here it seems to me that living-agent psi hypotheses have a plausible advantage. As Braude has shown, whatever we might say about so-called super-psi, to the extent that survivalists take seriously the evidence for living-agent psi, there is at least independent

evidence for “dandy psi,” as exemplified, for example, in the more impressive remote viewing experiments in the Stargate Project. In my paper critiquing David Lund’s argument for survival (referenced above), I argued that ordinary psi, which includes “dandy psi,” is sufficient to pose an explanatory challenge to the survival hypothesis. I’d say this advantage would extend to their comparative prior probabilities, at least to the extent to which independent support is being invoked as a determinant of prior probability. I think it’s plausible to construct a robust living-agent psi hypothesis with reference to dandy psi.

---

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2014

### **Philosopher Chris Carter: Super-psi is Pseudo-science.**

I have updated my web page on [Eminent Researchers](#) to include the following entry on philosopher Chris Carter:

Oxford educated philosopher Chris Carter is author of several books on the afterlife, including *Science and the Near-Death Experience*, and *Science and the Afterlife Experience*. Carter believes that consciousness is not produced by the brain. In his essay, [Does Consciousness depend on the Brain?](#), he justifies this belief by stating that the brain is more likely to transmit consciousness than it is to produce consciousness because the transmission hypothesis explains more facts than the production hypothesis. The transmission hypothesis explains how the brain can influence consciousness without causing consciousness by comparing the brain to a radio. When you listen to music on a radio, the radio seems to produce music, and if you damage the radio it will affect the music, but the music is actually originating from a radio station transmitting the broadcast. This analogy is similar to the [filter model of the brain](#).

In an [interview](#) on [Subversivethinking.blogspot.com](#) Carter sums up his work on the afterlife:

In my work I present the evidence that provides a prima facie case for survival; demonstrate that alternative explanations, to the extent that they are testable, have been proven false; and then argue that to the extent these alternative explanations are not testable (such as elaborate fraud scenarios, or super-ESP) they are pseudo-scientific excuses for refusing to accept an otherwise straightforward inference from the evidence.

---

## Contents

- ESP or veridical perceptions that occur during an NDE are best explained by out-of-the-body consciousness.
- ESP is not produced by the brain.
- None of the materialist explanations can explain any of the many anomalous characteristics of NDEs such as how people are conscious when their brain is not functioning.
- There are multiple independent forms of evidence which show that mind does not require matter for its existence.
- There is ample evidence that memory can be stored outside the brain.
- Consciousness, mind, or spirit is required for matter to exist.
- Scientists are fallible. Alternative sources of truth exist.
- Experiencers may be harmed by misinformation about afterlife phenomena especially if it comes from medical personnel.
- References

## ESP or veridical perceptions that occur during an NDE are best explained by out-of-the-body consciousness.

During a near-death experience, sometimes people with no brain activity perceive something happening around them or they may perceive something they could not perceive with their normal senses even if they were conscious such as a vision of the operating room looking down from the ceiling, or a vision of a distant location. When the events in these perceptions can be verified as true, they are called veridical perceptions. These veridical perceptions are best explained by out-of-the-body consciousness. Some people may call these perceptions ESP, but they are still best explained as out-of-the-body consciousness.

Many NDEs occur during cardiac arrest. Residual brain activity is not sufficient to explain memories or conscious experiences that occur during cardiac arrest. And cardiac arrest causes amnesia and confusion shortly before and after the event.

Some people may suggest an abnormal brain state during the onset or recovery from cardiac arrest may produce clairvoyant visions of events that occur during cardiac arrest. If this is true, the clairvoyance must still be due to out-of-the-body consciousness. The same argument by which NDE researchers conclude that the lucid conscious experience of the NDE cannot be explained by it occurring before or after cardiac arrest can be used to conclude that clairvoyance occurring at the onset or recovery from cardiac arrest must be due to out-of-the-body consciousness. That argument is that the brain activity that occurs at

the onset to, or recovery from, cardiac arrest is not capable of supporting lucid consciousness or memories. Any lucid conscious memories, such as those characteristic of NDEs, that occur anytime from the onset to cardiac arrest through the recovery from cardiac arrest, whether psychic or mundane, must be due to out-of-the-body consciousness.

In other words, if anyone is going to suggest that an abnormal brain state induced by cardiac arrest is responsible for producing ESP, that ESP must be due to consciousness existing out-of-the-body because the abnormal brain states that occur at the onset, duration, and ending of cardiac arrest are not capable of producing memories or supporting the lucid consciousness that is experienced during an NDE. At other times than the onset, duration, or ending of cardiac arrest, the brain is functioning normally and there is no abnormal brain state that might be attributed to the production of ESP. If ESP can produce conscious experiences that do not require the brain, then ESP must be due to out-of-the-body consciousness. In fact, in a subsequent section it will be shown that the best explanation for all forms of ESP is that ESP is not produced by the brain but is a capability of non-physical consciousness. In consideration of this and of all the evidence (below) that the mind can exist separate from the brain, the best explanation for veridical perceptions during NDEs is the spirit leaving the body and retaining memory of the event.

No physiological explanation can fully explain NDEs. Nothing that produces an abnormal brain state that can produce ESP, such as natural brain chemicals, or states of relaxation can produce experiences like

NDEs. So it is not credible that veridical perceptions in NDEs could be caused by abnormal brain states that are known to cause ESP.

In most abnormal states the experiencer knows he is hallucinating or experiencing clairvoyance, but NDErs consistently say their experience is real. Those states in which hallucinations are mistaken for reality do not share significant characteristics with NDEs. Those states in which ESP is mistaken for out-of-body experiences involve hypnosis, self-hypnosis, or some type of induction technique. However NDEs are not induced, they are spontaneous, and they are not caused by anything remotely like hypnotic induction such as religious expectations, or cultural expectations.

Joe McMoneagle is a highly regarded parapsychologist, a remote viewer, and a near-death experiencer, and his statements on the subject indicate he believes that NDEs show that the afterlife is real. NDEs demonstrate, he says, "**..that consciousness continues, and you don't really cease to exist as an individual...**"

[Back To Contents](#)

## **ESP is not produced by the brain.**

There is ample proof that ESP is real. However it is not possible for ESP to be caused by the brain because none of the laws of physics, including quantum entanglement, can explain how the brain might produce ESP. And in the case of telepathy, the unique structures in one brain will be meaningless to another brain. The existence of ESP is consistent with and mutually reinforcing to many other lines of reasoning that lead to

the conclusions that consciousness is not produced by the brain and that consciousness can exist separate from the body.

No physical mechanism in the brain has been demonstrated to cause ESP. ESP has been shown not to be limited by time and distance. ESP can reach into the past and future and is just as strong over short distances as it is for long distances. None of the known laws of physics can explain this. It has been hypothesized that quantum entanglement could explain ESP, because when two particles are entangled, determining a property of one particle will also determine a property of the other instantly, independent of distance between the two particles. However, quantum entanglement can not be the mechanism by which ESP occurs because for entanglement to occur, there has to be some mechanism by which entanglement is established. In lab experiments on entanglement, the entangled particles are created deliberately at the same time in the same location and then separated to demonstrate entanglement effects. While entanglement can occur in biological systems, as is seen in photosynthesis, in a biological system like photosynthesis, a mechanism for establishing entanglement is easy to explain because it occurs in a very small region at a specific time. However in the case of ESP, there is no mechanism by which entanglement between objects at separate locations could be established to produce forms of ESP such as telepathy and clairvoyance. Microtubules in brain cells have been proposed, by Stuart Hammeroff, as a mechanism for producing consciousness. It has also been proposed that quantum entanglement in that system could explain ESP, but again

there is no way entanglement could be established between separate individuals.

Furthermore, even if there were some way to entangle a physical structure in one brain with, for example in the case of telepathy, a structure in another brain, there would be no correspondence between the meaning of those two structures to the consciousness of the individuals. The patterns in one person's brain will not make sense to any another person's brain. The patterns of neurons in the brain develop differently in each person according to their genetics and environment, and those patterns change over time due to neuroplasticity. The meaning of a physical structure or pattern in the brain of one person will be unintelligible to another person. Entangling two structures in different brains would not be able to convey any meaning to either person. Therefore, telepathy cannot be produced by the brain by means of quantum entanglement or any other physical means. The very existence of telepathy, therefore, is evidence that ESP is not produced by the brain, and also that consciousness is not produced by the brain i.e. that conscious is non-physical.

There are also several other independent lines of reasoning that lead to the conclusion that consciousness is non-physical and not-produced by the brain. One of these lines of reasoning, for example, is based on the fact that that consciousness is a subjective phenomena that cannot be measured objectively and therefore cannot be produced by physical processes since all physical processes are, in principle, measurable. The only way to know what is in the mind of another person is through ESP, such as telepathy, or telempathy, both of which are themselves

subjective and unmeasurable by any objective physical means. Since consciousness is subjective and non-physical and cannot be measured by any physical process, ESP which can perceive aspects of another consciousness, must also be non-physical, and cannot be the result of any physical process in the brain.

People who believe that ESP is produced by the brain believe that some quantum effect must cause ESP because ESP is independent of time and distance. But there is a much better explanation for ESP that also explains why ESP is independent of time and distance. That explanation is the filter model of the brain. According to the filter model, consciousness is not physical and the brain does not produce consciousness but only filters it. The filter model explains all the facts that are explained by the production model such as the correlation between mental states and brain states, and the loss of functions due to brain injury. But the filter model also explains ESP and why it is not dependent on time and distance. According to the filter model, ESP is the means by which non-physical consciousness naturally interacts with its environment and because consciousness is non-physical it is not subject to the laws of physics or limited by physical parameters such as time and distance. The filter model also explains acquired savant syndrome where brain injury causes new talents to be uncovered and why brain injury sometimes result in development of ESP. These two effects are caused by brain injury that is like a hole in the filter that allows new aspects of consciousness to pass through it. The filter model explains loss of function injuries, such as amnesia, as being like a clog in the filter. The filter model also explains the unfiltered consciousness

experienced by NDErs that includes veridical perceptions, 360 degree vision and colors not seen while in the body.

Philosopher Chris Carter believes consciousness is not produced by the brain and that the brain transmits consciousness. Parapsychologists who do not believe in survival have to explain afterlife phenomena as the result of ESP produced in the brain of a living person. Chris Carter's work demonstrates that those theories are pseudo-science.

[Back To Contents](#)

**None of the materialist explanations can explain any of the many anomalous characteristics of NDEs such as how people are conscious when their brain is not functioning.**

All of the materialist attempts to explain NDEs fail to explain any of the many anomalous characteristics of NDEs. NDEs cannot be explained by a lack of oxygen, a dying brain, hallucinations, religious expectations, cultural expectations, hearing about medical procedures after the fact, brain dysfunction, retinal dysfunction causing an image of a tunnel, brain chemicals such as ketamine, endogenous opioids, neurotransmitter imbalances, or hallucinogens including DMT, REM intrusions, epilepsy or seizures, psychopathology, unique personality traits, residual brain activity during unconsciousness, the experience occurring before or after brain activity stopped, evolutionary adaptation, depersonalization, memory of birth, medication, defense against dying, or partial anesthesia.

Dr. Eben Alexander is a neurosurgeon who experienced an NDE and he believes NDEs are genuine afterlife experiences and that because of the way the brain is wired NDEs cannot be produced by the brain. He said, "...**consciousness outside of the brain is a fact. It's an established fact.**"

NDErs report their experiences seem more real than real, and memories of near-death experiences are more detailed than normal memories. This is the complete opposite of what you would expect from the fact of severely reduced or zero brain function during the NDE. NDEs due to cardiac arrest cannot be explained by residual brain activity during cardiac arrest or by having occurred before or after cardiac arrest. This demonstrates that NDEs involve a state of consciousness that is independent of the brain.

"The most important objection to the adequacy of all ... reductionistic hypotheses is that mental clarity, vivid sensory imagery, a clear memory of the experience, and a conviction that the experience seemed more real than ordinary consciousness are the norm for NDEs. They occur even in conditions of drastically altered cerebral physiology under which the production theory would deem consciousness impossible.

- Bruce Greyson

A listener to a radio interview with NDE researcher Dr. Sam Parni paraphrased his statements, "We now routinely overcome death, and the people he's studying are 'like astronauts – we send them out to explore this other dimension' – they are going to the other side, and they're able to tell us what they've experienced on the other side of death"

=====

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2009

## **Super-psi does not Explain the Evidence for the Afterlife**

### Contents:

Executive Summary

Introduction

Evidence for Super-psi

Evidence for Survival After Death

### Executive Summary:

Super-psi is the theory that the evidence for the afterlife is really caused by the unconscious psychic abilities of living persons. However, there is overwhelming evidence for the afterlife which cannot be explained by super-psi. Parapsychologists who believe in super-psi are probably suffering from perceptual bias.

### **Evidence For Survival that cannot be Explained by Super Psi:**

- Drop-in Communicators: A medium might be said to be fulfilling an unconscious psychological need when using super-psi to obtain information about deceased relatives of the sitters. However when the medium brings through spirits who are unrelated to the sitters and who communicate for purposes of their own, there is no psychological motivation. Super-psi cannot explain these cases.
- Cross Correspondences: When more than one medium spontaneously, without being prodded by an investigator, brings through parts of a message, and the message only makes sense when the parts are put together, this indicates that spirits are independent of any medium. This also shows that spirits have initiative and the ability to organize complex tasks. Super-psi cannot explain this.
- Spirits have to learn to communicate through certain forms of mediumship and some spirits are better learners than others. Super-psi is not a good explanation for this phenomenon.

- Other characteristics of spirit communication vary with the spirit not the medium or the sitters.
- Some haunting phenomena are not dependent on the presence of any single person, some of which are ended through spirit communication. Guy Lyon Playfair, William Roll, and Ian Stevenson all thought some poltergeist phenomenon were caused by spirits.
- Birthmarks: When a child remembers a past life, and has a birthmark at a location of an injury in the past life, it suggests the spirit body may carry information from one life to the next. It would be absurd to believe the fetus was psychic and was fulfilling a psychological need by unconsciously creating the birth mark.
- Shared Death Bed Visions, Shared Near-Death Experiences, and Multiple Witness Crisis Apparitions are not well explained by super-psi. You'd have to be a super-duper-psychic not just a super-psychic to induce hallucinations in other people.
- Near Death Experiences: Cases of NDEs where the experiencer has vivid realer-than-real experiences when there is no brain activity and no veridical information, cannot be explained as psi from a living person because there is no evidence of psi and no live person during the experience. These experiences cannot be explained as ESP during an abnormal brain state shortly before or after the experience. Near-death experiencers neurosurgeon Dr. Eben Alexander, psychiatrist Dr. Carl Jung, and military remote viewer Joe McMoneagle, who have special qualifications to judge the phenomenon, all believed their near-death experiences represented evidence for survival after death.
- ESP is not Produced by the Brain: ESP is not limited by time or distance. It cannot be explained by the known laws of physics including quantum entanglement. Since human consciousness is capable of ESP, consciousness cannot be the result of any physical process in the brain. Anyone who acknowledges the reality of ESP has already admitted that consciousness is non-physical so they have no grounds upon which to deny survival of consciousness.
- More

## **The illogical argument for Super-psi**

- Inaccurate and Unverifiable Control Spirits: When a trance medium brings through communications from a control spirit who gives inaccurate information, or who fishes for information, and who claims to be a person for whom there is no evidence of ever having lived, it is often said to be evidence of super-psi. This is not logical, super-psi is supposed to explain how a medium can provide accurate information about the deceased but in these cases the hypothetical super-psi is providing inaccurate information about the deceased.

[Back to Contents](#)

## Introduction

When a psychic obtains information without the use of the bodily senses, it is called extra sensory perception (ESP). Some researchers incorrectly believe that all phenomena which seem to be evidence of spirits and the afterlife are really due to the psychic functioning of living persons. This type of psychic functioning is called super-ESP or super-psi. In the case of trance mediumship, the medium is presumed to obtain information using super-psi and then unconsciously impersonates or dramatizes the spirit. However, there is much evidence for survival after death that cannot be explained by super-psi.

Super-ESP is defined differently by different authors.

Hornell Hart in Survival Versus Super-psi defines super-ESP as

- The use of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and retrocognition to obtain information from anywhere in the world and from any time.

Hornell Hart's definition was proposed to explain how a medium might get information about a dead person needed to dramatize their personality when the information is not available through telepathy from the minds of the sitters. According to Hart's definition, the medium has access to any information in the conscious or unconscious

mind of any person anywhere in the world or from any other source (such as events or documents) from any time in the past or future.

Neal Grossman in [Further Thoughts on Super-psi: A conversation](#) defines superESP as:

- Non-propositional knowledge obtained through ESP.

In the article, Grossman explains that knowledge about facts, "knowledge-that", is propositional knowledge. Other types of knowledge, "knowledge-how", such as skills, are non-propositional knowledge.

Grossman's definition of superESP explains how a psychic might use ESP to get the skills needed to dramatize the spirit of a deceased person. The ability to obtain facts through ESP doesn't explain how a psychic might obtain skills. To play a piece of music on the piano, you have to practice. No amount of reading about playing the piano can replace practice. One way skills are transmitted psychically is through mediumship. A medium in a trance may be able to speak in a language they never studied. In this case a spirit is controlling the medium's body and the skills come from the the spirit. Super-ESP, or super-psi, refers to the ability to obtain skills through psychic means from sources other than spirit influence. Some researchers who don't believe in the afterlife, believe super-psi allows a psychic to obtain skills and the psychic may demonstrate those skills while dramatizing the spirit.

[Back to Contents](#)

## The Evidence for Super-Psi

There is empirical evidence that supports the super-psi hypothesis. Some of this evidence comes from psychology where it is known that multiple personality disorders or hypnosis may cause people to exhibit alternate personalities that behave like some of the spirit controls of trance mediums. Other evidence for super-psi comes from parapsychology where experiments have demonstrated that ESP is not limited by time, distance, or the complexity of a task.

However, much of the evidence said to show that super-psi is the explanation for evidence of the afterlife comes from trance and other forms of mediumship. Much of this evidence is based on spirit controls of mediums who act like an alternate personality of the medium and whose identity cannot be verified and/or who give incorrect information when asked questions about the spirits they claim to be communicating for or otherwise act inconsistently with the character they purport themselves to be.

There seems to be a flaw in this reasoning. Super-psi proponents point out the possibility of super-psi based on evidence from psychology and parapsychology. But, then they identify examples of flawed mediumship that don't live up to the capabilities of what they say super-psi can achieve. Yet super-psi proponents assert these cases of flawed mediumship are instances of super-psi in action and conclude that mediumship that does yield verifiable evidence of identity of the spirit is a result of super-psi.

It is hard to understand how this flawed mediumship could be due to super-psi. According to the believers in super-psi, super-psi should give verifiable and correct information. If these mediums were using super-psi, their mediumship should be verifiable and accurate. Since it is not, then it is either not super-psi or super-psi is not capable of accurately portraying a deceased individual. In either case this is not evidence that super-psi is the explanation for accurate mediumship.

In fact there is another explanation for some flawed mediumship and it is based on empirical evidence not convoluted logic.

One of the observations that helped convince Richard Hodgson that spirits exist and can communicate through mediums was made when he began to understand the source of errors in Mrs. Piper's mediumship. This happened when spirits began to communicate through writing rather than by using the control Phinuit as an intermediary. Hodgson learned that there are many conditions that caused confusion in the communicating spirits. Confusion was caused by unfamiliarity with the conditions that occur when communicating through a medium, and by the transition from physical life to spirit life, or by a long period of

illness or mental turmoil preceding death. When spirits communicated by writing and controlled the medium themselves, their confusion was apparent. When spirits communicated indirectly through the spirit control Phinuit who spoke for them, confusion on the part of the communicating spirit was obscured because Phinuit was acting as an intermediary. This explains some of the failures of spirits to correctly answer questions aimed at proving their identity, and it explains some instances when Phinuit was inaccurate. These same phenomena are likely to explain other cases where flawed mediumship is purported to be evidence for super-psi. More information on Hodgson's research on the mediumship of Mrs. Piper can be found in the post [Mrs. Piper: Evidence for Survival After Death](#)

Hodgson's observations weaken the case for super-psi because they provide an alternative to the super-psi hypothesis to explain flawed mediumship and they are based on empirical observations not supposition.

[Back to Contents](#)

## **The Evidence For Survival After Death**

There are several phenomena that seem to demonstrate the existence of spirits and the afterlife which are not easily explained by super-psi and for which the survival hypothesis seems much more likely. This type of evidence often involves phenomena that are independent of any living person and often produce highly accurate information about a deceased individual. Furthermore, if someone is going to assert a phenomenon is due to super-psi, where a living person unconsciously imitates a spirit or simulates some type of afterlife phenomenon, he must consider what is known about how the unconscious acts. There must be some identifiable unconscious motivation or psychological need being fulfilled, otherwise the super-psi hypothesis becomes fatuous because it would be unfalsifiable and any phenomenon could be explained by it. For example, a medium giving a reading has a need to bring through information about the customer's deceased relatives and acquaintances. When the medium brings through spirits unrelated to the sitters it does not fulfill any psychological need. In many of the phenomena which are

better explained by survival than super-psi, there is no identifiable unconscious motivation or psychological need being fulfilled. These phenomena include:

- Drop-in Communicators
  - Cross Correspondences
  - Spirits have to learn to communicate through certain forms of mediumship.
  - Other characteristics of spirit communication vary with the spirit not the medium or the sitters.
  - Haunting phenomena that are not dependent on the presence of any single person, some of which are ended through spirit communication.
  - Birthmarks in children who remember past lives suggest the spirit body carries characteristics from one life to the next.
  - Shared death bed visions, multiple witness crisis apparitions, and shared near death experiences.
- Sometimes **drop-in communicators** who are unrelated to the sitters or the medium communicate through a medium. They do this for reasons of their own which have nothing to do with the sitters or the medium. This shows they are independent of any living person. Because of this, there is no identifiable unconscious motive or psychological need being fulfilled upon which to base belief in unconscious impersonation by the medium. Furthermore, the identity of the spirit is verifiable and they give accurate information about their life that is not know by the medium or sitters.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- The **cross-correspondences** were a form of message spontaneously received in parts by several mediums working independently. The parts of the message often consisted of obscure literary allusions unknown to the mediums and made no sense to any living person until put together after all the pieces had been received. This demonstrates that the communicator retained the specialized knowledge of literature he had when living, that he was still creative, intelligent, had initiative, had organizing and coordinating abilities and

was independent of any living person. As with the drop-ins, there is no identifiable unconscious motive or psychological need being fulfilled upon which to base belief in unconscious impersonation by the mediums.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- **Spirits have to learn to communicate through mediums.** In certain forms of mediumship, such as direct voice, trance, or materializations, spirits demonstrate a learning process. They may have difficulty communicating on the first attempt and they usually communicate more clearly and more naturally after several attempts. This indicates the spirit exists and is learning to communicate through the techniques of mediumship.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- Richard Hodgson, who studied the medium Mrs. Piper, observed that **characteristics of the communication varied with the communicators** and did not depend on the sitters. The communicators seemed to be independent of any living person. Some spirits were never good at communicating. Some spirits were better than others at communicating names. All spirits had trouble communicating at first but improved with practice. This difficulty in communicating could be overcome with the assistance of other spirits. Spirits seemed to be confused for a few days just after death. Stray thoughts from the spirits (not the medium or sitter) seemed to leak through into the communications as if the spirit was having difficulty controlling the means of communication and private thoughts were being transmitted unintentionally. These thoughts reflected subjects that would be of particular concern to the spirit such as situations involving living relatives but which were unknown to the sitters. The spirits of young children recently deceased had clearer memories of early childhood than spirits who had died many years before. Spirits of young children recently deceased tended to communicate more clearly than adults recently deceased. Spirits responded to questions intended to prove their identity correctly but not always in ways the sitters expected. Sometimes the communicating spirit was unable to give

information that was in the conscious mind of the sitter. On occasion, a spirit would not know the name of a sitter they were thought to know. Difficulty in communicating names was a common characteristic of the communication. If the investigator ran the sitting like a telepathy experiment, less evidential information was given through the medium. If he treated the spirit in a sensitive and soothing manner like an actual person communicating under adverse conditions, the communication was improved.

This is explained in more detail in [Mrs. Piper: Evidence for Survival After Death](#)

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- Communicating with spirits has eliminated **haunting phenomena** that had occurred with several successive residents of the same house who were unrelated and unknown to each other. The super-psi hypothesis can't explain this because it assumes there is a living person who is responsible for the phenomena. If the people in the house change, then according to the super-psi hypothesis, the phenomena should stop. It is stated in [Chapter 23. Poltergeists](#) of *A Lawyer Presents the Case for the Afterlife* by Victor Zammit, that the well regarded investigators, Guy Lyon Playfair, William Roll, and Ian Stevenson all believed some poltergeist phenomena was due to spirits.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- [Children who remember past lives](#) sometimes have **birthmarks** on parts of their bodies where they sustained an injury in the remembered past life. This is evidence for survival because it suggests spirit body carries characteristics from one life to the next. Invoking super-psi to explain this doesn't make sense. It is absurd to assume a fetus could be psychic and be fulfilling a psychological need by creating such birth marks.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- During shared death-bed visions (and other situations) multiple people who are not mediums see the same spirits. There are various ways this is demonstrated to be an objective phenomena and not a hallucination. Sometimes a person attending the dying sees the same spirits the dying person sees. There is also a case where the spirit who helped a dying person make the transition, described how they did that through a medium. When the investigators contacted a relative of the dying person they were able to get confirmation that the dying person saw the spirit and the spirit used an unusual phrase also reported by the medium. The medium and the dying person were unknown to each other but both reported the same phrase used by the spirit. This is evidence that the phenomena was independent of any living person. Several examples of confirmed death bed visions were discussed in the previous post: Death-Bed Visions Confirmed. Similar evidence comes from Shared Near Death Experiences and Multiple Witness Apparitions. When more than one person experiences the same phenomena, it becomes unlikely that the phenomena is dependent on one person because you would have to accept that the psychic abilities of one person could influence the perceptions of other people to cause these shared experiences.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- Near Death Experiences are among the best evidence for survival. They cannot be explained by super-psi or by any normal phenomena. All the purported "scientific" explanations for NDEs fall far short of explaining the full extent of NDEs. In many NDEs, shortly before, during, and after the experience, the brain is in a state incapable of supporting lucid consciousness so ESP from an abnormal brain state cannot explain NDEs. Super-psi is defined as some type of unconscious psychic functioning by a living person that simulates an afterlife phenomena. But, during many NDEs, the person has no brain function and is effectively dead, not living, so whatever happens during an NDE cannot be said to be due to super-psi. In some NDEs, there is no veridical content and those cases also cannot be said to be due to super-psi because there is no evidence of any psychic functioning. The lack of veridical information doesn't effect the validity of the experience as

evidence for the afterlife because if a person with no brain function can have any type of conscious experience, even if it is a hallucination, that conscious experience by a person effectively dead is evidence for survival. Furthermore, even if a person without brain function can be shown to have "super-psi", a dead person being psychic ought to be considered evidence for survival. Additionally, near-death experiencers, neurosurgeon Dr. Eben Alexander, psychiatrist Dr. Carl Jung, and military remote viewer Joe McMoneagle, who have special qualifications to judge whether the phenomenon could be due to ESP caused by an abnormal brain state all believe their near-death experiences represented evidence for survival after death.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

- **ESP is not Produced by the Brain** ESP is not limited by time or distance. It cannot be explained by the known laws of physics including quantum entanglement. Since human consciousness is capable of ESP, consciousness cannot be the result of any physical process in the brain. Anyone who acknowledges the reality of ESP has already admitted that consciousness is non-physical so they have no grounds upon which to deny survival of consciousness. The section ESP is not Produced by the Brain in *Near-death Experiences and Afterlife Phenomena* explains how the existence of ESP demonstrates that consciousness is non-physical and is not produced by the brain.

[Back to Executive Summary](#)

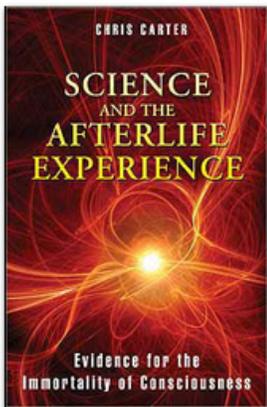
These examples of phenomena which appear to be due to survival and cannot be easily explained by super-psi are very strong evidence for survival after death. Furthermore, once you obtain evidence for survival from one form of evidence, survival becomes the more parsimonious explanation for many other afterlife phenomena and super-psi becomes a poorer explanation for those phenomena as well.

---

# 202. SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE OF AFTERLIFE OVERWHELMING SAYS CHRIS CARTER

[POSTED ON FEB 12 IN NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE](#) | [48 COMMENTS](#)

Interview with author Chris Carter explores the scientific evidence for the survival of consciousness.



Join Skeptiko host Alex Tsakiris for an interview with Chris Carter author of, *Science and the Afterlife Experience: Evidence for the Immortality of Consciousness*. During the interview Carter discusses the consequences of accepting scientific proof of an afterlife: **Alex Tsakiris:** Are there unintended consequences for overthrowing materialism? Maybe the game is going to wind up being played one way or another. We're going to wind up with scientific materialism or Church rule. Someone has made the decision that at the end of the day

I choose the phony scientific materialism over the thin, phony Church state.

**Chris Carter:** I think that's a false dichotomy. I don't think that's the choice. One of the major themes of my book is that there's a third alternative, one that does not require a leap of faith and one that does not require embracing the pseudo-scientific ideology of materialism. There's a third alternative and it is to examine the evidence without prejudice, without materialistic prejudice or religious prejudice, and see what the evidence says.

I believe that the conclusions that the evidence implies are not dogmatic. They do not ask people to go out and burn those who disagree with us at the stake or to wage war against those who disagree with us.

[Chris Carter's Website](#)

[Cynthia's Book: \*Belief Is So Last Century\*](#)

**Play It:**

Listen Now:

[Download MP3 \(58 min.\)](#)

**Read It:**

Today we welcome Chris Carter back to *Skeptiko*. Many of you know Chris for his withering attacks on skeptical nonsense and his books, *Science and the Near-Death Experience*, *Science and Psychic Phenomena*, and his latest, *Science and the Afterlife Experience*. Chris holds undergraduate and Master's degrees in philosophy from Oxford. He's a very fine writer, and it's a pleasure to welcome him back to *Skeptiko*. Chris, welcome back. Thanks for joining me.

**Chris Carter:** Thanks, Alex. How are you doing?

**Alex Tsakiris:** Great. Everything's good. This latest book is really fascinating. It's obviously a topic that we love to talk about here. You

really dig into so much. I'm hoping we can talk about the book but also talk about a lot of other things surrounding the book. I'm anxious to have you back on.

**Chris Carter:** All right. That sounds great.

**Alex Tsakiris:** So, Chris, you begin the book with this: *"The manner in which we live our lives, to a large extent, depends on what we believe comes after it."*

Fantastic; love it. Tell us more about that quote.

**Chris Carter:** Well, right above where I say that I mention a quote by George Orwell and it goes, *"The major problem of our time is decay in the belief in personal immortality."* So that's what inspired the first paragraph of my book. Orwell's grim vision of the future, which is portrayed in his novel, *1984*, fortunately did not come to pass.

However, many of us believe that mankind now faces a future even worse than anything Orwell imagined. We have population growth, we have global climate change, we have increasing income inequality in various countries, including the United States, increasing environmental devastation, basification of the ocean, growing hostilities around the world.

So I think that mankind needs a new message or perhaps an old message by which he can find a more purposeful and less destructive way of living.

**Alex Tsakiris:** That's interesting and that's certainly one way to take it. It's very interesting, actually, that you take it that way because I took it in a much more positive, personal sense. And that's that in one way we struggle with these large social and cultural issues that you talk about, but in another way it's really more of a personal journey for all of us.

It's what decisions we make about the people around us. About how we care for them, about how we think about ourselves and our roles and

our lives and what it means in relation to the people that have come before us either in our family or friends who have passed away. In that way, the manner in which we live our lives, to a large extent, depends on what we believe comes after it is a much more optimistic, has a much more positive spin to it, doesn't it?

**Chris Carter:** I think that yes, the belief in an afterlife most certainly does put a more optimistic spin on our lives. But I think it also makes us more aware of our obligations to each other, to future generations, to not use the Earth's atmosphere as one big garbage dump and to pay our fair share of environmental damage that we're causing by dumping 90 million tons of heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere every 24 hours through the burning of fossil fuels.

On a smaller scale, I suppose, just by treating each other more humanely by looking after others, by voting to sustain the planet and to reduce income inequality. To make the richer people pay their fair share. I hate to sound like some sort of crazy left-wing radical. I'm not. I consider myself a moderate. But I do think that there are very dangerous forces operating in the world today which threaten the long-term viability of human civilization.

**Alex Tsakiris:** You know, that's really interesting. I didn't imagine that we'd jump right into this political, current events kind of discussion but I'm really glad we did. I think it's an important landing point, if you will, for this whole discussion of survival of consciousness. We'll get back to talking about the book and survival of consciousness but I want to follow this line that you're on also because it's fascinating to me. We don't get a chance to talk about it enough, and that's that while I share your concern and the issues that you raise are obviously pressing and obvious to all of us, at the same time I can't help but feel that there's another way of looking at survival that turns all those issues on their heads. One of the natural conclusions from the understanding

of the best evidence suggests that survival of consciousness is real is that it gets us out of this time-limited sense that we live in and this pressing need to fix things now and that time is marching and that evolution is here and this kind of treadmill that we're on, doesn't it? Because now we're talking about consciousness really being infinite. And with reincarnation there's really no way to logically conclude that we're headed towards anywhere other than just further evolution, wherever that gets to. So isn't that another natural conclusion that one can draw from this whole understanding of consciousness being unlimited in terms of time? I mean, we have all the time in the world, don't we?

**Chris Carter:** I agree with you in a sense. I do think that reclaiming the widespread belief in an afterlife, which is something people did have perhaps 300, 400, 500 years ago, would result in many practical benefits. The philosopher, David Griffin, and I agree that belief in an afterlife confers several practical benefits, such as for example, such a belief may help overcome the fear of death. If people are convinced they're not ultimately subject to any earthly power, this can increase their courage to fight for freedom, ecologically sustainable policies, and social justice.

And if people believe that this life is not the final word and that justice will prevail in the next life, this can help them withstand the unfairness they encounter in the here and now. The idea of life as an unfolding journey which continues even after death can lead to a greater sense of connection with the universe as it unfolds into the future. And finally, the belief in life after death can help counter this extreme degree of materialism that has pervaded every niche of modern civilization, which many people think is behind a great deal of our most short-sighted and destructive policies.

**Alex Tsakiris:** I hear you. I rail against that kind of stuff all the time. You are also someone who is known to rail against those same things and rail against the fundamental materialist, dogmatic, pseudo-skeptic culture that we have. I get all that.

But let me play devil's advocate for a minute and talk about social cohesion. I want to take a little side trek with you for a minute and look at the vaccine controversy. Remember that guy, Andrew Wakefield, who said he's a doctor in the UK; he's a pediatric gastroenterology guy, I think, for kids. He has a bunch of parents coming to him and saying, "My kids have autism and gosh-darn-it, I know it's directly tied to these vaccines because we went and got the vaccines and boom. It happened."

So he's just a doctor presented with patients having this problem. He starts looking into this and he says, "Hey, I think there's something to this." He starts putting it together and wow, he gets slammed, right? I mean, this guy can no longer practice medicine. He's slammed; and maybe he was right. Maybe we shouldn't pump kids with nine different vaccines when we've never tested the interaction of these vaccines together. Maybe he was right.

But at the same time, didn't we need to put this guy down? Didn't we need to destroy Wakefield? Didn't we have to protect the herd? We can't have everyone running out and saying they're not going to vaccinate their kids.

So maybe in the same way, when we hear folks like Richard Wiseman say, "Hey, by any other standards psi is proven." And he could just as easily say, "By the normal standards of any other area of science, survival of consciousness is proven." He could say the same thing. But then he says, "But we still shouldn't believe it." Maybe what he's really saying is we've got to protect the herd. We've got to keep this thing going. So when smart guys like you, and I guess me, say we need to

end all this materialistic nonsense, where are we taking people? Where would we head if we didn't have this system?

**Chris Carter:** Right. Well, I'm not going to sit here and endorse the stupidity of the bovine mentality, the herd mentality. The Indians used to drive herds of buffalo off of cliffs because they knew that if they got the herd moving, the first ones would jump off the cliff because the others behind them were pushing them and the rest would simply follow the rest of the herd. So I have no admiration for the herd mentality. With regards to Shermer, I don't think his motivation is to protect the herd. I think his motivation is to promote his career.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Right. And I hear you. Okay, so bison over the cliff is a great story and it's true. But there's another story, too. The other story is the Huns over the hill, right? So we all get real lovey-dovey and start feeling all this we're all connected and we're all good and all this stuff that you guys are pedaling. Then the Huns come over the hill and they kill every man, woman, and child because they believe their god told them they were supposed to rule the world.

Or #2, the other thing, is that the Church gets all the power now because what you're really heading towards is some kind of spiritual understanding. We know where that goes. It's another power-grab by the bishops or the priests or whoever they want to call themselves. They grab all the power and then they start building all these nice little bonfires and are putting people on them because they don't think they're the right ones.

I mean, let's go there for a little bit, Chris, and not just talk about gee, we want change and we want this—let's talk about where that change could really lead. These are realistic, unintended consequences of survival of consciousness becoming the mainstream belief system.

**Chris Carter:** In my book I wrote, *“The experiences described in the pages that follow have important implications for humanity. Based upon*

*my own experience and that of many others, I sincerely believe that deeply beneficial changes in our view of the universe and our place within it will be gained by those who read about these strange and often wonderful experiences and then they take their profound lessons to heart.”* Then I add, *“Most people base their beliefs regarding the afterlife on religious or materialistic faith but there’s a third alternative. One that requires neither a leap of faith nor the denial of evidence.”*

So when you’re talking about some of the crimes that were occasionally committed by organized religion during the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, yes, those crimes were real. And those crimes led to a backlash known as The Enlightenment in which certain philosophers—not so much scientists—but philosophers such as Voltaire and Diderot and later in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Aldous Huxley and others and today in the work of Richard Dawkins and other militant Atheists, their work is essentially a backlash against the excesses of irrational religious belief and religious extremism.

They, however, have gone to the other extreme. They’ve embraced a doctrine of crude materialism which they think is implied by science, which is really not. It’s implied by science which has been long obsolete. Their militant Atheism is based upon this doctrine of materialism and they are going to do everything they possibly can in order to deny or discredit any evidence that falsifies the doctrine of materialism.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Agreed, but are there unintended consequences for overthrowing materialism? I just want to run that speculation with you, Chris, because we’re both of the same belief in terms of how completely idiotic that is in terms of trying to support that with any real science, any real evidence. But is there a chance that you know what? The game’s going to wind up being played one way or another. It’s going to wind up being played with scientific materialism or it’s going to

wind up being played with Church rule. Someone has made the decision that at the end of the day I choose the phony scientific materialism over the thin, phony Church state.

**Chris Carter:** I think that's a false dichotomy. I don't think that's the choice. One of the major themes of my book is that there's a third alternative, one that does not require a leap of faith and one that does not require embracing the pseudo-scientific ideology of materialism. There's a third alternative and it is to examine the evidence without prejudice, without materialistic prejudice or religious prejudice, and see what the evidence says.

I believe that the conclusions that the evidence implies are not dogmatic. They do not ask people to go out and burn those who disagree with us at the stake or to wage war against those who disagree with us. Or on the other hand, to deny or suppress evidence. I think there's a third alternative.

I'd like to read something from my book here where I briefly discuss that. It's in Chapter 1 and I say, *"The deniers and debunkers tend to be militant Atheists who are motivated by allegiance to an obsolete worldview by ignorance of the implications of the new physics and by a hatred of religion and superstition. If they admitted to the reality of psychic abilities such as telepathy and of the near-death experience as involving a genuine separation of mind from body, then the materialistic foundation of their worldview would crumble. The deniers fear that the demise of materialism would usher in a return of an age of religious persecution and irrationality.*

*This fear is evident in the apocalyptic strain of some of the Committee (Committee for Scientific Investigation) writing. For instance, the announcement of the founding of the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal stated, 'Perhaps we ought not to assume that the scientific enlightenment will continue indefinitely.*

*Like the Hellenic civilization, it may be overwhelmed by irrationalism, subjectivism, and obscurantism.”*

Then I go on to say, *“But these fears seem to be absolutely groundless. As mentioned above, surveys show that most scientists accept the likely existence of psychic abilities. Among the general public, belief in the reality of psi phenomena is widespread. But polls have also shown that over 90% of the public regard scientists as having considerable or even very great prestige and many of the leading near-death experience researchers are respected cardiologists and neuroscientists. And so I conclude society is unlikely to return to the Dark Ages because of widespread interest in psychic phenomena and in the near-death experience.”*

**Alex Tsakiris:** Okay. And Chris, I have to say you do build a very, very strong case in the book. Anyone who’s familiar with your previous books will appreciate the level of depth you go into and the extent of the evidence. It’s all very well documented. The way you’ve put it together I think is very, very convincing.

Let’s talk a little bit about the skeptical arguments against survival because you also address those in the book. You jump over on the other side and say, “Here’s my best argument against the skeptical arguments.” You spend some time talking about the materialistic arguments but you really make pretty quick work of a lot of that because it’s mostly nonsense.

There’s the argument that there isn’t any evidence and that it’s all fraud. You just handle those. You say, “Hey, there’s a ton of evidence and here it is.” You say with regard to fraud there’s always going to be isolated instances of fraud but it’s not reasonable to think that that’s going to account for very much of the best evidence that you’ve put forward in the book.

But you spend a lot more time talking about the super-psi explanation, or as you call it in the book, the super-ESP hypothesis, as a possible explanation for this survival of consciousness. Explain to us and maybe start by what is super-ESP and then why you think it doesn't hold up.

**Chris Carter:** Okay, let's treat this in a historical manner to see just how the super-ESP explanation came to be proposed. For as long as there have been human beings, and for all we know perhaps even longer, there seems to have been evidence suggesting that human beings and perhaps other living things survive the deaths of their bodies. We have the Neanderthals. They buried their dead with flowers and jewelry and utensils, presumably for use in the next life. So all through human civilization we've had people believing that they will survive the deaths of their bodies. Many people simply accepted it as a matter of course. It wasn't questioned.

So why did they believe this? Well, every indication seems to be that in all societies past and present people have experienced certain phenomena that would lead them to believe in survival. I'm talking about things like near-death experiences, death bed visions, people who report seeing deceased relatives coming to take them away just before they die. Children who remember previous lives—in other words, evidence for reincarnation. Apparitions, which have been reported from all societies of which we have records. And communication with the dead, which also seems to have been found in virtually all societies of which we have records.

So the obvious inference from this data was that we survive the deaths of our bodies and that sometimes those who have gone before us can return and communicate. Now, later on these beliefs were hardened into various dogmas. With the rise of agriculture came the rise of organized religion and priestly castes and of course, layers of dogma were added to the ancient beliefs in accordance with the conditions of

the various societies. Some societies had peaceful religions; some societies had war-like religions and so forth. But they all had various priestly castes.

This did lead, of course, in some places but particularly the West with its fragmented geography, into various religious schisms which sometimes settled their differences violently.

Then you had the scientific revolution due to people like Kepler, Galileo, and Newton. Now, Newton put forward a theory of physics which was very mechanistic and mechanical. The universe was now seen as a gigantic clockwork mechanism. Newton himself was a religious man. He thought that the planets were originally hurled by the hand of God and he thought that human beings were the sole exception in an otherwise deterministic, mechanistic universe.

But his followers, philosophers such as Voltaire, Diderot, and so forth, they wanted to attack the authority of the Church. The horrors of religious wars were fresh in their minds. So they used Newtonian physics to support the ancient philosophy of materialism, which essentially says that all that matters is matter and the mind is at most a useless epiphenomena, a by-product produced by the brain. So therefore, minds have no causal role in nature. The universe is causally closed. We should not believe in superstitious things or in organized religion.

Then, of course, Darwin came along with his theory of natural selection based upon natural selection operating upon random variation in order to...

**Alex Tsakiris:** You mean Alfred Russel Wallace came along, right?

**Chris Carter:** Darwin and Wallace invented their theory of evolution by natural selection at just about the same time. Wallace probably came up with it first. It's hard to say. Then Darwin basically panicked and decided to publish his book.

So anyway, this was further ammunition for the militant Atheists. And so in response, the British and American Societies of Psychical Research were formed, first in England and later on in Boston. They were horrified by the materialism which was helping to sweep away spiritual beliefs. So they wanted to take on the materialists at their own game. They wanted to find scientific evidence for survival.

And so they did. They found evidence of survival from apparitions and from communication through mediums. Then they seemed to have good evidence, good experimental evidence in favor of survival. The hypothesis that extrasensory perception could be used to explain these mediumistic communications was put forward. It was perhaps the mediums are very gifted in terms of extrasensory perception, in terms of telepathy and clairvoyance, and they're simply reading the minds of the sitters in order to convey messages that seem to be from the deceased but are actually from the minds of the sitters.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Right. So that's your super-ESP hypothesis, right?

**Chris Carter:** No, not yet. That's the ordinary ESP process. What happened then was an experiment was proposed. The so-called proxy sittings. And that's where one person sits with the medium on behalf of a third person who is not present. The person who sits with the medium is told nothing more than the deceased person's name and date of death. So they don't know the person; they know nothing about the person except for that. They go see the medium on behalf of that person as the so-called proxy sittings and then see if you get results and see if the results are as good as if the person was there.

What they found is that the proxy sittings gave results every bit as good as if the sitter who knew the person was there. So this conclusively proved false the idea that the medium was either fishing for information—in other words, looking for visual cues and following up on visual cues and so forth...

**Alex Tsakiris:** Chris, remind everyone what timeframe we're talking about here and who are some of the key players, both mediums and scientists who are investigating and really scrutinizing very carefully these mediums for any kind of fraud or impropriety. Throw out some names.

**Chris Carter:** Well, the British and American Societies of Psychical Research were really in full swing from about the year 1800 to about 1935, 1940. That was the heyday of psychical research into these things. Some of the people were physicists, Sir Oliver Lodge...

**Alex Tsakiris:** Who at the time was one of the most respected intellectuals and scientists of his day, right?

**Chris Carter:** That's absolutely right. There was Henry Sidgwick, the Cambridge philosopher. Frederic Myers, a scholar of classics at Cambridge. Mr. Hodgson and several others. William James in the United States. So there were some of the best intellectuals of the time. Scientists, philosophers, statesmen.

So anyway, the proxy sittings were invented and it ruled out fishing, where the medium fishes for information based upon various clues. They might say, "I see a man with dark hair." If the person goes, "Hmm," they go, "Yes, yes. He's a man with dark hair. I see a woman with blonde hair. No? No one with blonde hair? Okay, let's forget that." That's the technique of fishing.

Proxy sittings effectively ruled out fishing for information and they also ruled out telepathy between the medium and the sitter because the sitter didn't know any of this information. Yet correct information was conveyed again and again. Just as good as if the sitter had known the person in question.

So what happened was since the proxy sittings ruled out telepathy between medium and sitter, the extrasensory perception hypothesis of communication was extended further and further and further in order to

cover proxy cases. In order to cover the so-called “drop-in” cases where somebody drops in unknown to the medium, unknown to the sitter, yet also provides information that later turns out to be correct.

**Alex Tsakiris:** So give us an example of how this ever-expanding hypothesis gets spun out there. How do they say it?

**Chris Carter:** It’s supposed to work with a degree that’s seldom if ever seen, apart from such cases of communication with the alleged deceased in question. If you look at extrasensory examples of telepathy and clairvoyance in real life they’re very low-level sorts of events.

Telepathy is Latin for “distant feeling,” *tele* meaning distance, *pathy* meaning feeling as in sympathy and empathy. So telepathy literally means distant feeling. Clairvoyance means clear vision.

In real life these sorts of abilities almost always work between people who have some sort of close emotional connection. In the proxy sittings these people had no close emotional connection, yet extra-sensory perception was said to exist just as good as ever, with no reduction in ability.

The theory of super-ESP takes the theory of extra-sensory perception and it postulates that the mind of the medium has these supernormal abilities to access information anywhere, anytime, from the minds of people regardless of what those people are thinking. Regardless of what those people might be doing. Unlimited ability to access the minds from books which are at unknown locations on topics of no interest to the medium. And then it’s extended even further to assume that you can then dress up this information from the perspective of the deceased person in question. It gets even worse than that.

The problem with super-ESP is that it’s continually extended to cover each new case which cannot be explained on the basis of ordinary extrasensory perception.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Chris, let's talk a little bit about proof. At the end of the book you conclude by saying that there are three levels of proof. Proof beyond all doubt, proof beyond all reasonable doubt, and preponderance of evidence overcoming accepting the preponderance of evidence. Tell us where you fall in that scale regarding the belief that consciousness survives bodily death.

**Chris Carter:** In that chapter I have a section titled, "Theory of Knowledge," in which I first define knowledge. I would define knowledge as a belief that meets the following three criteria: first of all, it is justified by a critical evaluation of the evidence and so therefore we have good reason to think it is true. Furthermore, we have no good reason to think it may not be true. For instance, consider my belief that I have only one brother.

I believe this to be true because I was raised alongside them and I never saw my parents bring home and raise another boy. I therefore have good reason to consider this belief true. Furthermore, I have never heard any rumors about my mother giving up a boy for adoption before I was born, nor has anyone bearing a family resemblance or not ever approached me claiming to be my long-lost brother. I therefore have no good reason, or any reason for that matter, to suspect that my belief may not be true.

Now, could I possibly be mistaken in my belief? Of course. But my point is that I have good reason to think my belief is correct and no good reason whatsoever to think it may be false. I therefore consider my belief that I have only one brother to be an item of knowledge. In other words, I consider it to be a fact. So knowledge is a category of belief. It's those beliefs we have good reason to think are true and no good reason to think may be false. So I consider a fact to be an item of knowledge. After a fairly long discussion, which I really can't do justice in a brief phone call, I do conclude—as others before me have

concluded—survival of consciousness past the point of biological death is a fact.

**Alex Tsakiris:** A fact in which you say in the book is that's proven to you beyond all reasonable doubt. I think that's great. It's great that you'd come out and are that bold to say that because as you know, most folks who we expect to be proponents usually fall into that, "Well, the preponderance of the evidence overwhelmingly suggests..." but they won't go and say, "Hey, beyond reasonable doubt this is it." You push it to that next level. What does that mean for you? Why is it important to go there and say this is the way it is? It's beyond all reasonable doubt you survive your bodily death.

**Chris Carter:** Why is it important? Hmm.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Let's be real, right? Take NDE researchers. When you dig into these NDE researchers you can tell that's what they believe, right? But very, very few of them say it that way. They always just backpedal a little bit and play it safe with the party line, if you will. The evidence is all up in the air but it seems to be leaning this way. I understand—you're not an academic in an institution that requires you to hold any party line. But you do understand that your position is pretty bold, right?

**Chris Carter:** Yes, it is. I also think it's an important statement to make. As I said before at the beginning of this conversation, I think that if more people recognized that survival is a fact, first of all, I think it would bring a lot more happiness to their lives. It would bring them a lot more optimism and it would reduce cynicism. I think it would reduce anger and vindictiveness, bitterness. And I think it would lead people to lead better lives.

**Alex Tsakiris:** But aren't there a lot of steps in-between there, Chris? That's the one thing, I guess, that I took away from this. I'm on a similar journey that you are on in terms of this information, this data, this

knowledge. I think it can be personally transformative. I have not had a near-death experience. I haven't had any profound spiritual transformational experiences. I've had an experience of transformation via the data. Via the experiences of others, the people that I respect that I think have done a fair job of trying to sort this thing out and said, "Hey, this is where the truth seems to lie." So I am with you on all that. But I have to tell you, the people that I encounter in my day-to-day life, 1) they're not usually persuaded to change their beliefs by data alone. I don't know why. I'm kind of wired that way. But I've found that a lot of people don't seem to be wired that way. 2) What seems to get in the way for people are a lot of the steps in-between okay, that's what the data says and on the other hand, therefore this is how I should live my life. I mean, there's a lot of questions there. There's a thousand questions between my accepting that survival of consciousness is real and then my incorporating that into my life.

Carl Sagan wrote a book many years ago, *A Demon-Haunted World*. Hey, do we live in a demon-haunted world? Science has rescued us from that demon-haunted world. Do you want to send us back to it? Is the world demon-haunted? These are the kinds of questions that I think spring to mind for people when they're faced with the idea that consciousness survives death but they're not filled in with all the answers to all the questions that that stirs up. What do you think?

**Chris Carter:** Well, as I said before, I think my book shows there's a third alternative between blind religious faith and pseudo-scientific doctrine of materialism.

**Alex Tsakiris:** That's not what I'm talking about. Okay, so I accept your third rail. I'm all over it. I hear the data. Consciousness survives death. Huge implications for me now. What does that mean? Is it a demon-haunted world? Do I have to be afraid of spirits? What does this mean in terms of survival? How long do I survive? How many lives do I

live? Do I go to Heaven? There are a thousand questions that immediately spring to mind that are the real questions that people have, you know?

We play this little skeptic believer, science versus religion stuff, and that just gets played out in this cartoonish way. But what people are really worried about are the personal questions that lie underneath that. You've done a fine job in your book of equipping people with the information they need to approach that first question.

Okay, I can, as a reasonable person, accept that consciousness survives death. Bravo. Hurrah. But right beneath that are the really important questions. What are people supposed to do about those questions? It's not just a matter of consciousness survives death so let's save the planet and recycle. Those aren't the questions that people ask. They have deeper questions.

**Chris Carter:** That's why I wrote the final section of my book. The final section of my book is titled, "What the Dead Say." So once I've convinced people that the dead have in fact survived and are indeed communicating through gifted human mediums, then I discuss what they say. It's really those messages, I suppose, which are sources of wisdom and optimism. I don't think there's anything particularly horrific in there. There's nothing about eternal hellfire.

The dead to say the old saying, we shall sow as we reap. That has truth to it. But they also say there's no eternal hellfire. They talk about a gradual process of development on the Other Side. Many of us will return to this Earth to reincarnate. They say this does not happen 50, 100, 1,000 times. The average human being, according to the deceased communicators, only reincarnates two, three, perhaps four times at most.

So if people have questions like that, all they need to do is simply read the very last section of my book.

**Alex Tsakiris:** I'm kind of with you on that, Chris, but as you know, those accounts, they vary tremendously.

**Chris Carter:** I don't think so. I find enormous similarities between the different accounts. I explicitly point them out.

**Alex Tsakiris:** We've talked to folks on this show that have all sorts of varying ideas about that. People who are mediumistic, people who channel, people who do all sorts of things. You can also look over in the near-death experience literature which also gives these direct accounts. Go to [www.nderf.org](http://www.nderf.org), Jeff Long's website, where he's compiled 2,000 of those accounts. They vary tremendously. You'll hear very religiously oriented, "I met Jesus and he said this," versus all sorts of different accounts. So don't we have to be a little bit careful when we start doing content analysis there and saying we can pull it apart and this is what it indicates? I just don't think that's the case.

**Chris Carter:** I can't comment on Long's work. I have a whole section called, "Near-Death Experiences Across Cultures," in my second book, *Science and the Near-Death Experience*, and analyze near-death experience accounts from various cultures, China, India, Maori, New Zealand, Native Americans, and what I've found is that journeys to other worlds, out-of-body experiences, and encounters with the deceased and other worldly figures seem to be the most universal features of the near-death experience.

Borders of some sort are also found in accounts from different cultures. But tunnel and life review experiences seem to be mostly confined to the West. So I disagree that near-death experience are vast and varied. No two are exactly alike but myself and other researchers have found very great similarities between the near-death experience...

**Alex Tsakiris:** I think you're taking what I said in the wrong way. I mean the skeptical argument that they're vast and varied, no, I'm not going there. I'm very much a believer that near-death experience

accounts bring us closer to a deeper understanding of part of what happens in this journey beyond our physical deaths. I'm not going there.

I do think, and I think many people would agree with me, I've had the leading near-death experience researchers on the show and they've agreed that there really isn't a good explanation for some of the varieties. Sure, we can look for the similar patterns and those are important and they're certainly important when you're debating or arguing against a skeptic who says, "Gee, we have to throw out all these accounts because they're all over the board." No. That's not the case.

But if we're really trying to do a content analysis, I think a lot of near-death experience researchers will agree that they're challenging material. It can be all over the board. And the same thing with mediumistic readings. They can be very challenging in terms of figuring all that out.

But you know what? I'm glad you addressed it in that section of the book and maybe that's where someone has to take over and take their own personal interpretation of the material and decide how they're going to take it forward.

Let's do this. In the little bit of time that we have left, let's talk about where you go from here. This is kind of an important wrap-up for you. This was a trilogy of books and a fantastic three-book set that you put together. Where do you go from here with this, Chris?

**Chris Carter:** I'm not really sure, to be honest with you. I wrote an article in *The Journal of Near-Death Studies* in response to an article written by a skeptical anesthesiologist named Gerald Woerlee. He attempted to debunk the famous Pam Reynolds near-death experience which occurred when she was clinically dead, basically.

Briefly, they had to operate to remove an aneurism from her brain stem and to do so they had to clinically kill her. They had to stop her heart; they had to drain all the blood from her body; and then remove the aneurism from the base of her brain. During this experience she had one of the deepest near-death experiences ever recorded, showing many of the classic features found in most near-death experiences from around the world. For instance, feelings of peace, out-of-body experience, travel to another worldly realm, and meeting with deceased relatives.

Some people say near-death experiences are all over the map. No. The best ones, and most of them, include those three core elements, including those experiences found in different cultures. I don't care where you're looking. You can look in Guam, you can look in Maori, New Zealand, American Aboriginals, wherever. Those core experiences will be found in near-death experiences. Some idiosyncrasies will be found, yes, but they're usually trivial.

**Alex Tsakiris:** But Chris, why do we want to go there? I mean, why do we want to say something like that? That seems to suggest we understand what's going on, what realm they're going to, what dimension they're going to. Broaden it.

I just had Eben Alexander on the show, a month or so ago, a former Harvard neurosurgeon who had this dramatic near-death experience. Very transformative for him. Where he's going with the work is to look broadly at spiritually transformative experiences, right? Somebody has a Kundalini experience or somebody just has a spontaneous experience walking down the street.

You can find scores of these people in mental institutions because that's where they wind up. They've really had a real awakening, a spiritual awakening, that we don't fully understand and yet they wind up in mental institutions. But that's another story for another time. But I

think when we start going down that path and saying these are definitely the core experiences or the best experiences, we don't know what the heck we're talking about. We don't know what that means. Tomorrow I'm scheduled to have an interview with Robert Bruce, one of the best-known out-of-body experience travelers, astral travelers, in the world. He's been at it for 30 years. He's going to tell me a very detailed topography of the spirit world and all these different dimensions that he's traveled to, both higher and lower. I don't know how much of that is true but that's certainly his experience. He has scores of people who back him up on that.

What I say is we just don't know. We cross the chasm from this ridiculous materialism that we're in but then we have to be really careful because when we do cross that chasm, a lot of things that we try and say aren't going to make a lot of sense. We can't take this same scientific precision and bring it to that other dimension. It just doesn't fit.

**Chris Carter:** I agree with that. But my point is that I have read a great deal of accounts describing the so-called afterworld and what I find is a great deal of similarity. I also find the deepest accounts explain discrepancies between the other accounts. In other words, the people who have been there the longest. So I don't find that the reports are all over the map.

But then again, I don't read or listen to every single—shall we say—New Age account or wild claim that is presented out there. I go only for what I consider to be the best, most reliable, most well-documented reports. I find a great deal of similarity in my reports and I discuss this similarity in my book, *Science and the Afterlife Experience*.

**Alex Tsakiris:** I hear you, Chris. I just think when you start saying we only reincarnate two or three times, man, we have no clue. No clue.

**Chris Carter:** I didn't say I personally think we only reincarnate two or three times. I said that that was a claim made by one of the

communicators whom I regard as being the most trustworthy of the communicators, Frederic Myers, who established his identity over about 30 years through the famed cross-correspondences which convinced a great number of his friends and colleagues that it really was him communicating through mediums in various parts of the world.

Mediums that did not know each other.

So after about 25 years after he had gone through this extensive period of launching these cross-correspondences, which are essentially literary puzzles, he then sat down and dictated in two books through the medium, Geraldine Cummins, his account of his experiences in the afterworld and what he had learned. I consider that account to be one of the best.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Fair enough, Chris. I think I got you sidetracked. You were about to tell us a little bit more about where you think you might be heading. You were talking about your confrontation with Gerald Worley. What is coming up for you?

**Chris Carter:** Possibly some film projects. The first one may involve a challenge that I threw out to Gerald Worley. He said that the famous Pam Reynolds case could be explained in terms of some lingering sense of consciousness, some anesthesia-induced fantasy, and this sort of thing. I basically tore his arguments apart and then I challenged him.

At the end of my article I said, "Gerald, let's go to the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona and let's do this experiment. You and I will be prepared just as Pam was prepared before her operation and we'll see. We'll see if we can really hear people talking in the room, if we can really describe what's going on in the room, and if we can really hear the song, "Hotel California."

**Alex Tsakiris:** Fascinating. Now that would be an experiment that I would tune in to watch. I hope we get that on my local cable network.

Chris, we're running out of time. It's been great to have you on. I wish you the very best of luck with the book that is out now and everyone can get on Amazon. The title is *Science and the Afterlife Experience*. Again, Chris, thanks so much for joining me on *Skeptiko*.

**Chris Carter:** Thanks, Alex. If your listeners are interested they can actually go to the book's website. It's the same as the book—  
[www.scienceandtheafterlifeexperience.com](http://www.scienceandtheafterlifeexperience.com). They can read excerpts and endorsements and so forth.

**Alex Tsakiris:** Great. By the way, there are a ton of fabulous endorsements. I think that speaks volumes for the progress you've made and the respect that you've earned in this field. You obviously have a lot of supporters. Well-earned and best of luck with your future endeavors, whatever they might be.

**Chris Carter:** Thanks, Alex.

---