

PARANORMAL Phenomenon

General

We all should be reasonably open-minded skeptics and for psychic phenomena indicative of life after death, only accept the theory that there is survival of consciousness after physical death when theories along normal lines and/or ESP (psi) fail to account for all of the evidence.

- There is no doubt that in a relatively short period of time, science has made great strides in understanding the physical world. Because of this, many people believe that if presently there is not a scientific explanation for something, it is not a question of if it will be explained by science but a matter of when. Applying this to the various paranormal phenomena, these people believe science will either have a complete explanation in the future or it is just a deception of some sort. Generally speaking, there is strong evidence for some of the psychic phenomena but not to the point where it can be accepted as fact.

The extreme skeptics of the paranormal have a tendency to refute the least credible of paranormal examples; they seldom try to take on the best evidence and if they do they do not give very credible alternative explanations. To do the former, is easy, the latter, generally quite difficult. They also unfairly (and unscientifically I might add) tend to group all of the paranormal together and reject it all. Its not all or nothing and the same applies to the various evidence types for life after death. For instance, mediums communicating with the dead could be true but this has no relation with astrology being true or not - the two are independent of one another but this gets lost on some of the extreme skeptics in their overall outlook.

In fact, with the paranormal as it relates to life after death, there clearly are many cases of both deliberate deception (as we would expect due to the nature of the subject) and where there are alternative explanations. But these are not the cases we need to be scrutinizing to determine if they constitute evidence for life after death - although this is unfortunately what some skeptics do to present their conclusions against the paranormal. The cases that have no other plausible conventional explanation are the ones that need to be held to the test.

We also have to be careful with paranormal phenomena in that, even if the particular phenomena or, more commonly the case, elements of it can be induced, it does not necessarily mean or follow that this is the cause of the paranormal phenomena and the explanation for it. A non-paranormal analogy being, for example, certain drugs can induce euphoria in a person but when one normally is experiencing euphoria, it is real and occurs naturally without the effect of any drugs. Therefore, drug intake is not the explanation for euphoria normally experienced even though drugs can induce it.

It should be noted that the various aspects to the best paranormal phenomena cases have thus far been very difficult to account for collectively using natural scientific models.

- Some people will believe paranormal activity at face value with even the weakest of evidence. On the other hand, there are skeptics who are very closed-minded and biased and will not even allow for the possibility, no matter how convincing the evidence (and thus, maybe to an extent, possess irrational mindsets). A good example showing the mindset of a certain group of ultra-skeptical individuals who refuse to accept any paranormal explanation is the following quote from an [August 27, 2001 article](#) in the online magazine Salon.com interview with Michael Shermer editor-in-chief of Skeptic Magazine:

"If we asked, what would it take for me to believe in ESP? Would it take a single experiment? How about 10 statistically significant experiments in which the guy picked the right playing card? That still wouldn't quite do it because there's no way to understand how this could possibly happen in the brain. We understand how neurons and brain centers work but we don't know how something would transmit through space out of your skull into somebody else's skull. So those guys need to come up with some mechanism to explain it."

So even if the best explanation is a paranormal one, ultra-skeptics will not accept it because they do not understand the underlying mechanism for it.

- Most psychic occurrences are spontaneous and therefore hard to test under laboratory conditions. Ultra-skeptical scientists start with the assumption that something which contravenes the laws of science (as they are currently understood), cannot occur. They are not open to the possibility of non-material mechanisms explaining the data. Their lack of belief is a form of belief in itself.

In science, a new scientific statement is only accepted if it either agrees with established scientific laws or replaces rival statements with superior evidence and theory. Psychic phenomena clearly don't fit the first and haven't succeeded so far in the second. Not to make excuses for it, but due to its nature, what is needed is a new framework to examine the claims for the various psychic phenomena rather than the existing limiting experimental science we have. Of course, ultra-skeptical scientists would rather not do anything that might accommodate anything to do with the paranormal and would therefore reject any such suggestions.

The logic of scientific inquiry must always allow for the possibility that the existing scientific laws are incomplete or even wrong.

Science is what we always need to use as the basis to start with, and if it fails to explain the phenomena, only then should we go outside of mainstream science and look at the possibility of paranormal explanations.

- William James was interested in the possibility of psychic phenomena. He believed it is sufficient to find one indisputable example of psychic occurrence to demonstrate that violations of natural law as we understand it is possible. He summed it up with the well known quotation

from his book: "In order to disprove the law that all crows are black, it is enough to find one white crow." Thus, psychic researchers are always trying to find a "white crow".

® Much of the paranormal evidence types for survival of consciousness can be explained by normal means, some of it is not possible to determine, and some is very likely to be evidence for survival. It is as if, on the surface at least, one can interpret however one wants - almost as if it is supposed to be this way.

Near Death Experience

Since I have not written nearly enough to date on this very important evidence type, the reader may also wish to look at the most comprehensive website on this subject which is <http://www.near-death.com>. Also, an excellent overview of the NDE is given by one of the worlds leading researchers on NDEs, neuropsychiatrist Dr. Peter Fenwick (Link: http://www.iands.org/research/important_studies/dr._peter_fenwick:_science_and_spirituality.html).

To start, I will say that medical and psychological explanations for the near death experience (NDE) have been given but they are speculative and fall short of explaining the entire phenomenon.

- The temporal lobe in the brain is the area where NDEs are experienced. If one doesn't believe we have a soul, then you are stuck trying to explain why we have an area of our brain which allows us to experience an NDE. Some will say it is there from an evolutionary standpoint to ease a person through the dying process. But this cannot be so because there is no survival advantage to thinking that you are leaving your body at the point of death. Possibly it is an advantage to people witnessing the death since the dying person will not appear to be struggling, although just prior to experiencing the NDE, the person is for visible practical purposes, already dead. Still this is not a trait that could be passed on in any preferential way.

® In fact the NDE is actually against evolutionary survival - it is a state which is highly pleasurable (in most cases) from which one would not necessarily want to escape from. If there were no NDE for the dying person, then they would fight death as much as possible instead of succumbing to it. And in fighting it, would be more likely to survive.

- Interestingly, the cause of near death or clinical death (heart attack, head injury, etc.) nor other factors such as drugs in the system or oxygen and/or carbon dioxide levels in the blood does not

seem to impact the NDE experienced. This makes the case for the NDE being real as experienced stronger.

- If one is aware under anesthesia, the experience is fragmented and frightful with paralysis. But the NDEs reported for people under anesthesia are not at all like that and are pleasant with no pain felt as well as 'crystal clear' consciousness, when in fact there should be no conscious recall.

- In the reported NDEs, when the NDEr may have been in great pain prior to leaving the body, leaves the body there is no pain sensed whatsoever. Upon re-entering the body, they are immediately in pain again.

- The longer the clinical death, the more expansive and prolonged the NDE. Again, this gives more strength to the argument it is in fact consciousness separating from the body. If it were just in the brain, then the opposite would be expected.

Ⓜ After accounting for the length or extent of the NDE, if the NDE were simply a hallucination or concoction of the brain, would we not have varying degrees of vividness and memory of the NDE, unlike the 'all or nothing' that is reported?

- NDE researcher Dr. Kenneth Ring in his work on NDEs found that the congenitally blind (blind from birth) do not have sight in their dreams, yet if they experience a NDE, they have an ability to see for the very first time. If this is correct, then this is strongly suggestive of consciousness separating from the brain during the NDE. This would also seem to indicate that dreams are in fact products of the brain.

- In the NDE going through a dark tunnel may be explained by the cut-off of blood to the occipital lobes at the back of the brain. Entering a world of darkness makes sense for a dying brain to which sensory input has been stopped. But what explains the brilliant light and emotions filled with such bliss after the darkness? Hardly what you would expect a dying brain to produce.

The dying brain hypothesis breaks down when the brain is clinically dead. Since there is no break in consciousness and it is continuous, then the dying brain hypothesis cannot account for the NDE as occurring just around death and/or resuscitation.

- It could be possible that God may have made our brains so that they allow us to experience the NDE so that we can make a smoother transition from this life to the next.

- One explanation given by scientists is that the NDE is a universal recall of the birth experience - travel down the birth canal (dark tunnel) and ending up in bright light at the moment of delivery. The problems with this theory are patients born of caesarian section are reported to have this NDE and the bright light upon entering the world is hardly a wonderful experience (that's why the baby cries so much). Also, a babies eyes are closed during birth and it is not known what the baby experiences. And why would humans undergo a repeat of the experience when dying?

- The NDEs reported are essentially the same throughout the world. Though existing religious knowledge or beliefs seem to influence any religious figure one may encounter on the other side. Nevertheless, the experience could be real and tailored such that the transition to the other side is easier.

- The NDEs of very young children are in all essence the same as that of older children and adults. The influences of culture, religion, and concepts of death would be very limited on these very young children. Therefore, this goes against arguments that there is influence and conditioning from prior knowledge on what is experienced and makes it less plausible that the NDE is a concoction of the brain.

Ⓜ Not all people who reach clinical death recall a NDE (the reported range is only 10-18%). The possible explanations are: (1) Everyone does have an NDE at this stage but the brain 'filters' the NDE memory out for some people when revived or the NDE is not always 'recorded' onto the brain (ie. 'access' is either given to the memory or its not), and/or (2) There is a lag time before many of us would experience consciousness again after physical death (even after consciousness has left the body), and/or (3) Consciousness does not always separate from the body right away, or (4) Only some of us survive physical death but this would be completely irrational as we would expect all to do so or none. My guess is that the most likely explanations are one or more of (1), (2), and (3).

Expanding on (3) further, people who experience NDEs and OBEs are more likely to leave the body quickly at or near death or even possibly under other circumstances. Thus NDErs stay trapped in the body for lesser time after it has stopped functioning and this is probably determined by a biological predisposition somehow (at least to a certain extent). For the rest,

they had not been dead long enough and an insufficient amount of time had elapsed for them to have an NDE.

- The explanation of particular chemicals being in the brain at death as being the reason for the positive NDE doesn't explain why some people experience a hellish (or negative) NDE (the range for reported NDE cases is 1-2% as the lower estimate and 10-15% as the upper estimate; but truly hellish is 1-2%). If the NDE were 'hard-wired' into our brains, we would expect them all (except for the odd anomaly) to be of the same type.

When elements of the NDE are induced in people in experiments (note: all aspects of the NDE have never been induced collectively to the best of my knowledge), the resulting experiences are not well remembered. The actual NDE is of great clarity and vividly recalled well into the future which is the opposite of what one would expect if it were just a dying or impaired brain.

There is commonly a spiritual transformation in the person who has experienced the NDE which has not been explained in any other way nor repeated in laboratory experiments. This profound transformation simply cannot be replicated in a drug-induced state and this suggests it is likely more than just brain chemistry at work.

- For someone experiencing an NDE, the whole universe typically opens up more to them - which is the opposite of what one would expect considering the brain is closing down or has closed down. The NDE in fact seems to be more real than life itself - one has 'crystal clear' consciousness. It is life changing and the most profound and 'real' event of life for most NDErs. During a NDE, an 'ocean' of knowledge is sometimes a descriptive term used to report what becomes available to the NDEr, but it is hard to retain new found greater knowledge when NDErs comes back. Our brains may in fact be limiters of our consciousness. Not all what are labelled as NDEs are necessarily consciousness separating from the body. Some might be hallucinations triggered by drug induced states, some could be vivid dreams (but NDE experiencers overwhelmingly deny this to be the case) triggered by a trauma, and some may be non-NDE transcendental experiences.

- The explanation that the NDE is caused by carbon dioxide overload or oxygen starvation in the blood stream, even if it were possible, is inadequate because many NDEs occur without either of these conditions present. But the latest research on a small sample size for carbon dioxide and NDEs is suggestive of slightly higher carbon dioxide levels may be leading to a greater probability the NDE will be recalled, though this contradicts the limited previous research. Perhaps a slightly higher carbon dioxide level indicates these subjects had gone further in the death process and that is why they had a NDE? Higher carbon dioxide levels in the blood normally indicate a better cardiac output and thus probably have better brain recovery and less

amnesic effects due to a greater quality of resuscitation, and hence a better chance of recalling the NDE if had underwent one.

- When initially crossing over, there seems to be a 'transition zone' where one sees the other side in what may be a predetermined way (including 'hellish' experiences which some souls may have chosen as a temporary state prior to their life on earth and even those are sometimes taken as positive afterwards by the experiencers and can have benefits such as no longer fear death) or that they may expect due to the life lived (and also religious beliefs). This temporary transition zone to the spiritual dimension might be there so the soul that has just went through a physical death can better 'adjust' for what lies ahead and not be as confused or experience too much of a shock at once.

Ⓜ It may even be that the hellish NDE is experienced only because the person is to return to this life and may need this experience for the remaining life to be lived here. It could even be that hellish experiences do not happen or are relatively rare if the soul is not to return (actual death takes place and the soul is not to return back to the physical body but to move onto the spiritual realm and not just have a NDE). Or maybe, if the soul is not to return, the hellish NDE state is only a temporary one to endure in the transitional zone before moving on to the next realm. Interestingly, in the reported hellish NDEs, the experiencer is observing but is not part of the 'hell' and this would seem to be indicative of this being only a temporary or transitional experience.

- NDErs experience the actual negative and positive feelings they inflicted upon or gave others throughout their lives (later confirmed to be correct) during the 'perfect playback' of the life review in a 'full' NDE and as it happens. The life review is often reported as being panoramic. There seems to be an accelerated thought as the life review is covering life in detail. There are no unrealistic life reviews reported - all correct ones only. All this is truly amazing and I hardly can see any biological reason or explanation for this; and only a spiritual one is (by far) what would make sense.

- There has not been a plausible alternative explanation for the out of body experience (OBE) that often occurs with NDEs. This is probably the single most convincing component of the NDE to suggest the NDE is exactly what people who experience it claim it to be - a round trip to the 'other side'. Though the weakest NDE with OBE cases, which do not have the clarity or the narrative quality about them and are paranoid in nature, are likely just hallucinations and thus probably not NDEs.

A sensation that one is leaving or has left one's body has been induced under laboratory conditions without such actually taking place (without undergoing an OBE) - as have certain other elements of the OBE but never collectively to replicate an OBE anywhere even close to the full expansiveness of it. In fact, some OBEs (the weakest cases) are probably just a form of disorientation of spatial self. The latest research from two separate sets of experiments published in the August 24, 2007 magazine/journal *Science* showed that by using virtual reality technology, researchers were able to trick the subjects' sensory system by creating a very convincing illusion so that they were perceiving their bodies from a new perspective which was outside of their actual physical bodies. The experiments only provided subjects with an image of disembodiment which was believable to them. Only a touch sensation (not an OBE) was induced which fooled the subjects. The subjects understood it to be just an illusion whereas people who have an OBE consider it to be a real experience. Something like this type of illusionary experience could account for some or even all of the OBEs some people occasionally report when experiencing sleep paralysis and even in certain medical conditions.

Having an OBE and obtaining information otherwise not attainable (eg. from another room) has not been replicated under laboratory inducement. And there is no reason to believe it can be without it actually taking place as a real OBE. Further rationale for the OBE that occurs with the NDE being real as experienced is that the NDEr often is looking back at their body they have just left behind and not just 'floating up'. The OBE that occurs with the NDE is typically accurate in all details.

Some NDErs while having an OBE with the NDE report having a 360 degree spherical vision and say they were able to take in everything at once.

With OBEs, some do occur when the person is not near death. Persons have reported leaving their bodies and going to some other place (sometimes distant) that is out of range of their normal senses and observed and later reported on events (such as a conversation between two people) that they could not have learned about by normal means. In a small number of cases, the person experiencing the OBE may be 'seen' by another person at the place where the experiencer had claimed they had been (these cases are referred to as "reciprocal"). However, I am inclined to think that many of these OBEs (but not all) are not real and are only concoctions of the mind/brain.

Even better evidence for life after death is the veridical NDE in which the person undergoing it acquires information not known to them prior that could not have been obtained by normal means and is later verified to be correct. The experiencer may see events at some other location (for example, another room in the hospital they are in). Or the person might meet a deceased loved one who communicates information unknown previously to the person undergoing the NDE which is later verified to be correct. A more common example being they report encountering people whom they did not know were dead but who were later confirmed to have been at the time they had the NDE.

There is still a remote possibility that the OBE and/or NDE may be dependent upon a physical body being alive or revivable (though this would probably be highly unlikely and especially for a

NDE and OBE occurring together). In other words, we cannot rule out that consciousness, even if detached from the physical body, may still be dependent upon it for its continued existence.

® Experiments to test NDEs with OBEs to determine if consciousness really does leave the physical body have been done on a very limited basis with no results to present. Typical experiments are putting cards or displays with words or numbers or images only viewable from well above eyelevel if one were to leave their body and not known to staff or even the experimenter and sometimes periodically changing in hospital cardiac care units. Future studies are planned and what I expect is the results should be positive but inconclusive and skeptics will find flaws in the studies and alternative explanations. This is what I expect because to me it looks like this is the way its supposed to be (ie. the natural order in the bigger scheme of things is that whether or not we survive physical death is not to have a conclusive answer that all will agree on while here on earth and instead has to be interpreted). Unless of course it is the spiritual order for great evidence or even proof to be revealed in the near future through such. There is currently a very comprehensive study underway that should yield some results led by Dr. Sam Parnia involving 25 European and American hospitals in which 1,500 cardiac arrest survivors are to be examined (Link: <http://www.mindbodysymposium.com/press-articles.html>).

® A) The evidence is showing that the NDE is occurring during 'flat line' (no brain activity which happens within 11 seconds of the heart stopping) since (1) The NDE is continuous and there are no blackouts or cutoffs; (2) Cannot happen only while brain activity dying out or coming back periods only due to continuity issue; and (3) Aside from the continuity problem, the NDE would not make sense to be happening in the dying or recovery periods due to insufficient oxygen in the blood in and to the brain and lack of brain activity for such a vivid experience for a materialistic explanation. If consciousness is solely a product of the brain, then I do not see how the NDE could occur during either of these periods. But if consciousness is separate from or can exist outside of the brain, then the NDE can occur during these periods.

B) If the NDE is occurring only before brain function ceases, there would after this be no consciousness and would hit a blank state and then when resuscitated would regain consciousness. The cases reported would be that a NDE occurred, followed by death and ceasing to exist, and then life again. In other words, if one had ceased to exist, then one would remember the NDE, then no recall, and then would awake to find oneself in their body and would have had a discontinuity of consciousness which is not found in the reported NDEs. Unless this abrupt change shows up as the 'snap back' into the body (and as expected the blank state will not be recalled). But our understanding of the brain shows if consciousness is part of the brain, then consciousness slowly comes back when a person is resuscitated and not all of a sudden. And the 'snap back' cannot be explained like this as it is too abrupt and sudden.

C) If the NDE is occurring after the person is resuscitated, then the NDEr would say it occurred after recovery as they know they have recovered (and the discontinuity of consciousness would still be there also).

With B) and C) (but not A)), would have periods of firstly decreasing and secondly increasing consciousness (as well as a discontinuity in between) which is not what we find to be the case.

- I wanted to outline some thoughts on a study by Dr. K. Nelson published in April 2006 (*Nelson, K., et al, Neurology, 66, 1003-1009*) which tried to establish a link between NDEs and REM intrusion (rapid eye movement dreams while the person is typically actively dreaming while half awake and just falling asleep or waking up). It received a lot of sensationalistic mainstream media coverage at the time from 'journalists' who did not really understand the study. Many of the worlds leading NDE researchers were not happy with the misinformation in the media that resulted (nor with the poor quality and what appears to be a study setup to try to get, or come close as possible, to a predetermined outcome) and pointed out the flaws in it and why REM intrusion is not an explanation for the NDE as follows (much of this is from Dr. Jeffrey Long and Dr. Janice Holden's lecture at the International Association for Near-Death Studies annual Conference in 2006 and an excellent and very thorough analysis in their article in the [*Journal of Near-Death Studies, 25\(3\), Spring 2007*](#); comments from P.M.H. Atwater, Dr. Alan L. Botkin, and Dr. Bruce Greyson, along with some of my own comments):

[Note: If you are not familiar with this study, then my recommendation is to waste little or none of your valuable time on this, at best, mediocre 'research' as the only things possibly learned are that REM intrusion could only be an explanation for the weakest NDEs (which really are not NDEs at all) and after experiencing an NDE a person may be more predisposed to REM intrusion]

- The control group was made of 55 people 'recruited' from the medical staff and associates (friends and colleagues of Nelson) and these type of people are less likely than the general population to admit to undergoing REM intrusion (for reasons such as career related - not wanting to come across as day dreamers and therefore unprofessional). The NDE group already had demonstrated they want to share such experiences and are of the type to be more aware or interested in their paranormal or altered states, etc. and wanting to be part of a study like this and that is why they responded (64 responded out of 464 invited and 55 were chosen). So even without having an NDE, they would be more likely the type to have, be aware of, and admit to having REM intrusion.

- Not all people who experience NDEs will report them (say half as a first order estimate) and the same (but probably higher proportions would report I would guess) would hold true for REM intrusion. Therefore, it is expected that up to the same proportion of the control group would not either for REM intrusion. This would be ok but here the NDE group was the type to report at or close to 100% and this distorted the results in this study as this was not taken into account.

- The control group only had a REM intrusion experience reporting of 7% which is lower than the general adult populations of 10-15%. Only 13% of the control group reported having experienced sleep paralysis which is much lower than the 40-50% of the general adult population. Therefore, the control group was not a properly selected one and thus is a big flaw in the study and this could by itself fully account for the data.

- The study was only a retrospective (not a prospective) study which was only based on correlations.

- NDEs occur in various circumstances and sometimes in conjunction with REM intrusion but the two are fundamentally different.

- 40% of NDErs do not report to have experienced any aspect of REM intrusion. Therefore, REM intrusion by itself could not explain all NDEs and at best only some.

- NDErs are more likely to notice and remember REM intrusion as a result of becoming sensitized to such experience since their NDE. In other words, the NDE is more likely to give one a predisposition to REM intrusion rather than the other way around. It was already known by NDE researchers prior to this study that there are changes to sleep and dream states for the majority of people who have had a NDE and this in itself could explain the data in this study. To do the research properly, one would have to do before and after NDE investigations for REM intrusion in order to establish baselines. Also, it may be that NDErs in this study are not necessarily experiencing REM intrusion more often but are more sensitized (possibly as a result of having an NDE) to noticing and remembering REM intrusion.

- People who have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are more likely to have waking dreams (REM intrusion). But dreams are obviously not the explanation for PTSD. It is the experience of the PTSD that predisposes one to this greater REM intrusion. Similarly, the NDE predisposes a person to having REM intrusion and this is likely what is happening. It is also known that PTSD symptoms are increased following an NDE (and thus REM intrusion might be also).

- It appears that the researchers thought they were getting some responses about REM intrusion which were not actually REM intrusion and this is more so with the NDE group and therefore skewed the results in favour of a correlation between NDEs and REM intrusion.

- It is quite possible that anyone who survives a life threatening event, even without an NDE, is likely to report higher unusual fall asleep and waking up experiences. If this is true, then there would be no support for the hypothesis that REM intrusion could account for NDEs.

- The NDE is very different from REM intrusion in that there are unknown aspects to it that may have meaning later and is experienced as being real, coherent, of great clarity, meaningful, and remembered in detail for life. Unlike REM intrusion, the NDE has a consistent fundamental structure that is basically the same across differing age and cultural groups. REM intrusion is based on a known environment, one realizes it is hallucinatory and not reality, and it is unrealistic typically. The NDE has profound life changing effects while REM intrusion never does. The NDE is specific and not at all like the random dreams of REM intrusion which are

about anything. The NDE is almost always pleasant while REM intrusion is not and may be frightening. Since some of the 'hellish' NDEs reported tend to be disjointed, REM intrusion could be an explanation for a greater proportion of these (than for positive NDEs). But this would mean either they are in fact not NDEs or that they are 'lower level' NDEs and REM intrusion in combination.

- Nelson, et al. talked about the fight-or-flight response due to the nerve pathways in the brain which are also associated with REM intrusion. He then suggested that there could be a possible association between NDEs and REM intrusion. But this could never account for REM intrusion underlying the NDE occurring where there is no chance beforehand to assess danger such as an unanticipated blow to the head resulting in immediate unconsciousness leading to an NDE. Or in cases where the person was not aware they were in an immediate life threatening danger such as surgery or illness from which an NDE resulted. The hypothesized link between NDEs and REM intrusion does not seem plausible.

- NDEs commonly occur eventhough the person undergoing the NDE is under the influence of medication known to suppress REM.

- People born blind from birth who have never seen anything (not even blackness) have reported NDEs. Their dreams have no sense of sight and have been shown to have no REM while they dream. Moreover, NDEs experienced by these people often include sight.

- People have reported NDEs while under general anesthesia for which the brain functioning necessary for REM intrusion to occur would not be expected.

- In REM intrusion, the person often feels terrifyingly trapped in ones body whereas with NDEs people do not and it is commonly reported by NDErs that their consciousness was no longer associated with their physical body. NDE researchers do not report of anyone feeling frantically trapped in ones body while undergoing an NDE.

- REM intrusion experiences do fit the profile of hallucinations based upon the visual and auditory data whereas the vast majority of NDEs do not. NDErs rarely report anything (other than a subsequent NDE) reproducing any part of their NDE and this further suggests that NDEs and REM intrusion are different experiences.

- Only about 10-18% of people who clinically die report NDEs but maybe all experience them but not all remember them. This may be due to the fact the NDErs brain allowing them to do so. Thus possibly some peoples brains allow them to experience REM intrusion. The NDE alters the brain and may sometimes reduce the 'filter' on consciousness. This may partly explain reported greater psychic abilities after an NDE and/or REM intrusion being more likely to occur. People who remember their NDE are more likely to recall REM intrusion as happening to them.

- It is quite possible that some of the weak or quasi-NDEs are just REM intrusion. However, REM intrusion could not account for most NDEs and certainly not the best ones. REM intrusion could never account for veridical perception.

- These same authors have since done some more work with OBEs that was published this year which didn't generate much interest. I haven't read the study but did look at the press release and it looks like the same problems exist as the same control group was used. In it they showed that NDErs are more likely to have an OBE when in sleep paralysis. These findings are along the lines of theirs for REM intrusion and NDEs but the fundamental difference is that the OBE is a common part of the NDE while REM is not. The likely reasons for this are they are more likely to remember their OBE and/or the NDE may have altered their brain such that they are more likely to experience sleep paralysis and resulting OBEs and/or people susceptible to sleep paralysis and NDEs are probably biologically predisposed to leaving their bodies more easily.

- Even though the research has been of dubious quality, we can probably extract from it that there is some correlation between the ability to recall or experience an NDE and the same ability for other transcendental or altered states of consciousness.

- NDErs have reported being revealed past lives they have lived while undergoing an NDE. This could either be collaborative of past lives or that NDEs and past lives have a similar and linked natural materialistic explanation. The former is more likely I would think.

- For the strongest NDE cases, a skeptic would have a lot to try to explain away which cannot in all likelihood be done without invoking the paranormal. Aspects of the best NDEs which I think an alternative explanation is very hard to see forthcoming include: (1) No measurable brain activity while the NDE occurred and the person was clinically dead, (2) No discontinuity of consciousness of the experiencer (even though they were clinically dead and had no measured brain activity), (3) OBE with a 'birds eye' perspective looking back at ones own body, (4) A life review often with feeling the effects one had on others at specific times in their lives, (5) Coming across beings one knows who have pre-deceased them who are likely in their 'prime' in terms of the earthly existence they had, (6) A reluctance to return (and there seems to be a point of no return which if crossed the soul could not come back into the body) which is also against what evolution would predict. (7) Encountering a 'Being of Light' with whom there is a communication by direct exchange of thoughts, (8) Life changing, and (9) Veridical nature.

All of these would have to be explained by some mechanism or model which could account for all the components of the NDE collectively - I do not see any indications or possibilities of this to date and do not see any on the horizon nor really expect to (though one can never rule it out).

- Dr. Raymond Moody has seen very good evidence for a relatively more recently reported phenomena now known as the 'shared death experience'. In it people present at the death bed of a loved one have in significant numbers reported seeing the same experience as that of the person who is undergoing the physical death. Elements of the NDE or death experience are shared. The bystanders report seeing a bright light, a tunnel, deceased loved ones, other spiritual beings, and

a 'holographic' panoramic life review of the person undergoing the physical death. They report co-living the death experience in an empathetic way with the person dying. It really is compelling evidence for survival of consciousness and there is nothing at all similar to this seen at other times or under other circumstances.

An alternative explanation might be that of telepathy or hallucination due to expectations and/or wishful thinking as knowledge of NDEs is commonplace. But it would have to be telepathy only or both when more than 1 bystander has the same experience. It may even be that the experience is not being shared with the person dying and it is only the bystander(s) having the experience. Though with more cases reported in the future we may possibly (if that is the spiritual order to allow this) get cases of the person having the death experience not actually dying but having a NDE. Then we should be able to ascertain whether or not at least the NDEr also consistently collaborates and confirms what the bystander(s) reports.

Entities (ghosts, poltergeists, spirits, angels, etc.)

- Entities are reported in all cultures and parts of the world and have been throughout the ages independently (for the most part) of the knowledge that they have been observed elsewhere. This makes their existence, that much more probable.
- A ghost may be the leftover energy ('extra energy') of consciousness or a physical body that is no longer alive - it is like an echo that dissipates over time. It appears a traumatic death increases the probability a soul would leave a 'stamp' of this 'surplus energy'. These types of apparitions do not exhibit the full characteristics and dimension we would expect from a soul or entity. They are only mere 'shadows' of them. But there is some survival of energy still manifesting itself - therefore it has also survived physical death but appears to have been 'left behind'.
- Entities could be just mortal life forms that exist on a different physical plane. Or they could be apparitions (when physical conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind, etc. are just right, the entity 'appears' because the physical factors reproduce a 'recording'). It is possible, as hypothesized by some, that a magnetic field in the rock or stone at the haunting site could act much like videotape does in saving and replaying a previous history there. Though ghosts do seem to be connected to an individual who previously died in the same physical location. Also, sensing smell and touch as well as sight and sound from entities is very strong evidence that these are not just apparitions. And many do appear differently in space and form under varying conditions. Thus, this natural explanation could only account for some (the weaker) cases of what appear to be entities.

Ⓜ Magnetic fields might only 'record' the ghost that is leftover energy as we do not also see the surroundings of that moment captured in time being left behind as part of the apparition. Thus, magnetic fields would not be the generator of apparitions and only the recording medium for them. It seems then to result in an apparition, would need this leftover energy (say released and left behind from a traumatic death that took place) in order to leave this imprint onto a magnetic field.

If in fact magnetic fields were the generators, then we would expect to see many more apparitions with the electrics in buildings of more recent times producing electromagnetic fields (unless of course there is some inherent difference between the magnetic fields generated from electromagnetism vs. geomagnetism which should be not the case). And in industrial settings where we have large magnetic fields generated from things such as electric motors, transformers, industrial magnets, and various machinery we should see apparitions as a result, which we do not.

- Some ghost sightings can be explained away as being hallucinations. However, many cannot. For example, where there has been more than one person seeing the ghost at the same time or when someone else reports a similar or exactly the same sighting at a later time (especially when they have no prior knowledge of the previous sighting so there is no expectation that one will experience such and therefore they are not simply hallucinating what someone else has already seen). The same applies to paranormal activity in general. It seems that more than one explanation would have to account for the observations. What is most likely is that in the vast majority of cases, hauntings can be explained by normal (natural) means, some cases are probably this 'extra energy' left over or behind, and very few cases are probably the spirits of the deceased that may be trapped and have not moved on permanently to the spirit dimension or have but occasionally return for some unknown reason(s) .

- There could be a 5th or another dimension (beyond the 3 dimensions of space and 1 of time; note that string theory predicts 10 or 11 dimensions depending on the version) or other dimensions that could contain the spirit world. Entities may be able to travel back and forth from the other side (or this other dimension). They may not be trapped here as is often assumed about ghosts and only 'visit' us in order to convey a message(s) - the major theme possibly being that there is a continuation of the spirit after physical death.

It is conceivable that entities could be partially in our dimension and partially in some other dimension simultaneously.

- If we could somehow physically measure the presence of entities, that would be evidence for their existence in this world. Though one could argue that since they are not part of this world this would not be possible. They may have an energy field unknown to physics as we currently

understand it and which is similar to or the same as would be for a soul. Because we haven't yet discovered it or understand it, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. This energy form could be analogous to say electromagnetic radiation.

- Though it is a very remote possibility, time travel, has not yet been dismissed as being theoretically impossible by physicists. Thus, it has been suggested that ghosts could be time travellers from the future (and probably not from earth) who have travelled back in time. Of course this is very far fetched and the fact ghosts 'haunt' places often for centuries and mischief by poltergeists would not make sense either.

Though if it is theoretically possible for us to travel backwards or forwards in time, I think would require us to have consciousness which can separate from the physical body.

- Poltergeist activity may be the result of psychokinesis. This is the influencing of matter by the mind(s) of people in the environment (this is done unconsciously). The paranormal activity results from the minds of the people moving objects, etc. without knowing they are. Though very unlikely, it is still an alternate explanation to that of an entity known as a poltergeist being responsible.

- There are many cases of people reporting to have seen a life like apparition of a relative or friend right before, when, or just after they die in cases where the living person does not receive news of the death (or even have any prior knowledge the person is in poor health or danger) until sometime after the sighting. This is known as a crisis apparition. This appears to be more common when the two persons (the one seeing the apparition and the just deceased) are physically far apart (eg. on different continents) - as if it is more imperative to let the loved one know that they have passed on otherwise they may not find out until too much time has elapsed.

- People have reported contact with angels who have come to guide them.

- It seems exorcisms have 'removed' ghosts, poltergeists, and evil spirits. Although we cannot be certain as to the nature of the entity removed nor are all so called exorcisms in fact possessions by entities (the overwhelming majority of cases would be psychological in origin and not in fact possession but some may in fact be possession by an external entity). These entities could in fact even be aliens or some type of inter-dimensional beings. If some of these possessions are actually due to evil spirits, then this is evidence for a spirit world and therefore indirect evidence for life after death.

- The following table summarizes some of the senses that are affected and changes in the environment in the presence of entities. What we need to ask is (1) Have more than one of these been observed simultaneously? and (2) Has the sensing or activity been repeated with variations (eg. in type of sound, location, etc.)? If the answers are yes, then this would probably be sufficient evidence for the existence of entities which are not merely apparitions.

<u>SENSE/ACTIVITY</u>	<u>POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Sight	Apparition	Not likely the only explanation since not all are static, can vary, and appear under different conditions. Most often (almost always when can be validated historically) like that of a deceased person connected to the location
Smell	None?	Typically of a short duration unlike normal smells which linger
Sound	Apparition	Not likely explanation since not always the same in type, intensity, duration, or location
Poltergeist Activity	Some life form or type of energy (but not that of a deceased person or animal) not known to us	Alternative explanation cannot be ruled out. Psychokinesis also a possibility
Touch	See Poltergeist Activity	Alternative explanation cannot be ruled out
Temperature Drop	" " "	Alternative explanation cannot be ruled out
Orb Activity	" " "	Alternative explanation cannot be ruled out

Exorcism is usually effective against all of the above and psychic mediums seem to validate the existence of the spirit of a deceased person connected to that location. This person is typically confirmed through the historical record. The alternate explanations would be that the medium is providing this additional information (including the spirits name commonly) by either (1) engaging in fraud by obtaining this information beforehand, (2) 'picking up' thoughts or

memories or tapping into a 'pool of consciousness' for the universe if such a thing exists, or (3) external manipulation by alien beings or demons (negative entities). The explanation that ghosts are the spirits of deceased persons might be the only plausible one. Especially considering the fact that more than one (or even all) of the above senses affected have been known to occur simultaneously.

Most likely, some ghost sightings are apparitions or hallucinations or even fraud; some may be the result of some type of natural phenomena; and some may indeed be the spirits of people who once lived there and occasionally return/still reside there.

Reincarnation

An excellent thorough overview (about 14 pages) of this subject is given on Victor Zammit's website (Link: <http://www.victorzammit.com/book/chapter24.html>). In this field, research into past lives and its analysis done by the recently departed Dr. Ian Stevenson was of the highest standard and thoroughness. I am currently working on my own study of reincarnation and will have my comments on this site up in the near future. Until then I recommend the above link. However, I do have some of my own thoughts on reincarnation as follows:

- Telepathy would not seem a plausible explanation for recall of past lives because the people recalling them do not have any extraordinary powers that are otherwise known about (ie. have not demonstrated such in any other ways). Reincarnation is a much better explanation than telepathy since the past lives are remembered as actually being lived through the eyes of the person remembering them. Another telepathic way in which a person could get this information is by 'picking up' memories after the person from who the memories originate had died by way of these memories still 'floating around' to be picked up by someone. But unless young children are somehow better able to 'pick up' these memories, it wouldn't account for the fact that young children are more likely to have past life memories. It should be expected that all age groups are equally as likely to have them.

More often than not, children who do consciously recall their previous life tend to have had a traumatic death and have reincarnated very quickly and often to a location not too far away. It is as if the memory is 'fresher'. If reincarnation is what it appears to be, then the fact that the ability to recall past lives declines with age could be accounted for. The youngest children who can communicate verbally are the ones who are most likely to have this ability. This is because the brain shuts down the door on past lives as we grow older (when they may possibly be accessed via the subconscious, if at all). A spiritual explanation for having these memories might be that they ease the transition into this new life and to instill in one that the life ahead of you to live has a purpose.

If it exists, super ESP or super psi (the passing of large amounts of information from one person to another) could account for past life memories but not for skills which have to be acquired through practice such as the speaking of a new language (actually, more accurately, language requires both the obtaining of new information and practice to develop the skill of speaking the

language). Thus, it is highly unlikely that xenoglossy (in cases suggestive of reincarnation, speaking in a language without having learned it by normal means) could be accounted for by super ESP.

- Fraud could be perpetuated on the part of the investigator in these cases - but to do this would typically require the collusion of the subject and their family and many witnesses. This would be quite a feat to pull off with several cases.

- Possession by a spirit as an explanation would still be indirect evidence for life after death. Possession or manipulation by aliens is also a very remote possibility.

- Though extremely unlikely, a combination of these alternative explanations is also possible - two or more explanations other than reincarnation accounting for the observations.

® There is one other possibility (though it would be highly unlikely that I expect it to be the explanation) that I can think of. That is, much like with apparitions being as the result of left over energy (if some of the ghost phenomena can be accounted for this way), this energy instead of dissipating into the environment over time could possibly in early infancy or at around or before birth of another person, somehow imprint or imbed itself onto the fetus or baby very early (at this stage only there might be a susceptibility for allowing such). And this could also be an explanation for the birth marks related to traumatic death in the previous life associated with some past life memories.

Thus, the infant would already have this imprinted or imbedded memory and maybe personality prior to acquiring its own memories and personality development. Over time, any prior remnant personality and memories would dissipate much like an apparition does (albeit at a faster rate - maybe because it is in a body which somehow 'absorbs' this energy better). This is why the previous personality and memories seem to be eventually forgotten by the child as they grow up.

Though it would seem highly unlikely, if true, this might even be able to account for xenoglossy or skills that have to be learned through practice. It is similar to picking up memories but of a much higher level and greater transmission of information.

This alternative explanation is paranormal in nature and similar to reincarnation but consciousness has not moved from a body that has physically died to another new one but some part of the memories and possibly personality associated with the consciousness have. If true, this would only be evidence for some memory survival (and possibly some aspect(s) of personality continuing) but not for survival of consciousness.

However, I would think it could hardly be able to account for recall of more than one past life (ie. multiple past lives) for which evidence for is brought out under past life regression therapy through hypnosis. Although some or even all past lives 'remembered' under this technique may be false and due to information picked up by normal means by the child or adult and transformed or converted somehow by the brain into these past life memories. Interestingly, regression therapy has been reported to yield visions of possible future lives also.

Hypothetically, it could account for some or all of the reincarnation cases, as the apparent reincarnation could just be surplus energy from a traumatic death. But in the strongest cases, it is as if the whole consciousness of someone who lived prior has carried over and survival of consciousness is a much better explanation. Additionally, the 'lag' period for the soul to spend in some spiritual dimension first before coming back to earth that is often reported (ie. from regression and mediumship) would not be accounted for, which going by the evidence we have would seem to be the norm for most of the cases. It would also mean that people reporting the past lives not of very recent times would have to be picking up memories of deceased person(s) that were 'floating around' or dormant in the environment for periods of time without these memories being largely compromised (though they could become fragmented and still have this happen). And in fact there could be more than one explanation to account for the evidence for reincarnation that is observed.

- Assuming reincarnation happens, from what I have read and tried to rationalize, it seems the soul has a choice whether or not and when to reincarnate (to some extent at least) and typically does not do so right away after death. Typically there is a period of reuniting of the 'soul group'.

- Child prodigies like Mozart, who was composing music by the age of 5, are hard to explain from conventional wisdom. How could someone develop such a talent so quickly? Possibly, they have brought this 'developed' talent with them from a previous life?

- If we assume homosexual preference is roughly 1 in 25 or 30 of the general population, then this is probably too prevalent to be considered a genetic defect. Neither would this be a genetic trait passed on to subsequent generations because of its very nature, it reduces offspring produced. It is not probable that homosexuality is a learned behaviour as it has generally had a stigma attached to it throughout cultures. Therefore, we may be only left with 'instinct' as the explanation for it by default. Possibly it is chosen prior to incarnation.

- If we humans do have souls, would it not be only fair, naturally just, rational, and to be expected that animals do also? With reincarnation being true, then this would likely automatically follow. This makes better logical sense than does only humans possessing souls.

Though animals, at least the less intelligent and less aware life forms, might have more of a 'group soul' (ie. a single soul may be divided over several animal bodies).

In fact, higher life forms did not appear right away on earth possibly because there weren't souls progressed enough to occupy them at the time. These souls might have had to start from 'scratch' and life on earth advanced along with the souls. Thus, man only appeared recently. The Creator may have chosen not to create what we might call perfect souls and instead had them improve through their own free will. It might even be that such perfect souls cannot be created for some reason we do not know.

- If there is life elsewhere in the universe, it may even be possible for us to have lived or live as those alien forms of life in past or future incarnations.

- Typically, identical twins have quite similar but still different personalities though they are identical genetically. The scientific explanation for the personality differences is that these can be accounted for by environmental factors starting with their different positions in the womb. But often there is little difference in environmental factors and even Siamese twins, who for practical purposes have no differences in environmental influence and social experiences (other than position in the womb in case it might be a significant factor which seems quite unlikely), can often possess quite different personality traits. Possibly, the differing underlying personalities of each of the souls may account for the variations?

- An argument against reincarnation is that the population explosion over the past century or so would not have had a sufficient number of souls for the number of people born in that time unless they were created as needed from 'scratch' which would not make sense from a reincarnation standpoint because that would mean these 'brand new' souls would be less advanced ones than the average and therefore we would have seen a large deterioration in the 'quality' of human beings which we cannot say has been observed. The actual fact is that the best estimates show more humans have died than are now living. However, if many of these souls have been born into human form several times previously on earth, there could be a 'shortage' of the necessary souls to accommodate the population explosion. But what is more likely is that even if no new souls were to be created, there is a 'pool' of souls somewhere in the afterlife which is much greater than needed to supply human bodies on earth and these souls could allow for unlimited population growth on earth. Also, souls may incarnate from this pool to other worlds as well as earth so it could be possible souls on earth may have had previous incarnations in other worlds unknown to us (and vice versa). Finally, possibly some souls may have advanced to taking human form from that of prior animal ones as taught by some religions.

- Some of the reasons we do not remember past lives (and past deaths) here on earth (except for the very rare case) are these past life memories would interfere with our lives here (need a blank slate for spiritual lessons having the full impact) and not being burdened by them and have this distraction; a uniquely experienced life here may be desirable spiritually; and no actual benefit except less anxiety about possibly not having a soul but we can make greater spiritual advances (accelerated spiritual progression) this way - which is likely why we are here on earth in the first place. Possibly if we can also have incarnations into other worlds and universes, past life memories may not be withheld there.

- Unlike for reincarnation, evidence for lives lived between lives is very limited. Michael Newton is one of the few people who claims to have collected such evidence from patients while they are in an extreme hypnotic state. He has also had subjects who report lives lived on other planets while under this same state. His first book on the subject was "Journey of Souls" and the subsequent follow up book is "Destiny of Souls". An alternative explanation might be the hypnotherapist is telepathically projecting their thoughts onto the patient during the hypnotic state and the patient is reporting essentially the same back.

From regressions, the interlife reported suggests that it is not simply just false memories otherwise why would this type of memory be reported? These interlife memories first came about in the 1960's when the pioneering researchers working independently of one another reported these same interlife memories of their subjects. Neither the subjects nor the researchers should have had prior knowledge of this in order to come up with, intentionally or not, false memories of an interlife, though this cannot be ruled out with 100% certainty.

Another further point interestingly is that psychologists and psychiatrists using past life regressions report that the people undergoing such who are regressed to the moment of death and just after have the same experience reported by people undergoing NDEs. Thus, this is good collaborative evidence for NDEs being real as experienced by the people undergoing them. Or alternatively, unlikely as it may seem, the brain is just hard-wired to produce these type of memories. Or even less likely, there is fraud involved in.

Communications with the Dead

Psychic mediums like John Edward (TV show "Crossing Over" which is no longer on the air) and James Van Praagh (TV show "Beyond" which is no longer on the air) claim to receive messages for people from the departed souls of their deceased relatives and friends. There are 7 possible explanations other than actual communication with deceased souls as follows:

(1) Cold reading. The medium is only giving messages of a little better quality than most people could with some practice. The medium asks leading questions, gives only general information applicable to most people, and other 'trickery' to give the appearance that information is being passed on. If you have watched one of these shows closely, then you would have to conclude

this is not the sole method of deceit (if such is taking place) because the quality of correct information that is communicated is too specific.

(2) Warm (eg. information obtained prior by internet search) or Hot (eg. questioning people who know information about the person to be read beforehand) reading. The medium (or resources at his disposal such as staff researchers or investigators) collects information about the person to be read beforehand.

An example of this might be that if show tickets are mailed out, then the show could readily find out information on the audience participants since they know their addresses along with the name of at least one person who will be attending associated with it. However, hot readings are much less likely and harder to obtain for general audience participants than for pre-booked or celebrity readings.

This cannot be the sole explanation because specific information that is only known to the person being read is often given during readings. Also, if hot readings are common practice it is easy to be found out in the process eventually and reported to the media; the fact this has not happened suggests it is unlikely that it is being used to any large extent. (1) and/or (2) is what most skeptics who do not wish to give any credence to any psychic phenomena whatsoever choose to believe as their explanation.

(3) The mediums could be in collusion with the people they are reading. If this were the case, then over the years thousands of people have been given 'successful' readings by some well known mediums. Because so many people would be involved over a long period of time, then we would expect that someone would have 'blown the whistle' by now if this were in fact happening. In addition, this would also mean that people like Larry King and Montel Williams (talk show hosts who regularly bring on mediums to do these type of readings) would have to be 'in on it' - considering how little they would stand to gain and how much they have to lose, we could say this would be very unlikely.

Nevertheless, we cannot rule out that it could possibly explain some (not as well known) mediums but not all mediums and their readings.

(4) Mind reading (telepathy). Mediums are reading the minds or 'picking up' the thoughts of the people who they are 'connecting' with their loved ones. If this were the case, the medium would most likely just be reading what is on the person's mind at the time but this is not often the case. In addition, the medium relays information which the person could not and does not know at the time and later finds out to be true.

A possible test to see if mediums are reading minds is to have them read subjects who do not speak any language the medium knows or understands. This would not completely rule out mind reading since it might even be possible that mediums can read pure thoughts which transcend any language.

We can effectively rule out mind reading as the sole explanation because of the research done by Dr. Gary Schwartz (presented in his book "The Afterlife Experiments"). He tested mediums and

found them to give information about the subjects being read not known to the subjects and later found to be true.

(5) Demons (negative entities). The mediums may unknowingly be communicating with demons or evil spirits who for whatever reason(s) are posing as the departed souls.

(6) Aliens. A very far-fetched possibility is that the whole process is being manipulated by alien beings who may or may not have created us.

(7) Pool of consciousness (super ESP or super psi). Another highly improbable, but worth considering, possibility is that mediums are somehow 'tapping into' the collective pool of consciousness that may exist in the universe (or even just picking up thoughts 'floating' around connected to the person being read). But how would super ESP account for relaying information of events in the future? Of course, the afterlife could also be part of this pool and therefore exists anyway even if the medium is reading into this pool and not directly connecting with the dead.

® If mediums are tapping into such a pool, then they would be consciously engaging in deceit since the information would be coming to them in a different form than what they are leading us to believe (thoughts instead of messages in the form of conversation). If the mediums are just tapping into this pool, then they would somehow need to sort out what information needs to be extracted (which deceased person's life). A reason they may not be doing this is that the departed souls give us information in readings that is from both before and after their passing. This would only make sense if there is a survival of consciousness; otherwise by what mechanism would thoughts associated with a person when they were alive be combined with that since their death?

If the mediums are able to both engage in mind reading or finding out information about the person being read beforehand (warm/hot reading), and then tap into this pool of consciousness, they might fool us.

From my observations of Mr. Edwards and Mr. Van Praagh's TV shows, two or more of (2), (4), and (6) (warm/hot reading, mind reading, and tapping into a pool of consciousness) have to be occurring for a reading to give an explanation other than what the mediums are claiming to be happening. Of course a better test for Mr. Edwards and Mr. Van Praagh is when they appear as guests on "Larry King Live" (as they regularly do) where they do readings for viewers who phone in. Here they are not in a position to find out information about the people to be read beforehand (these people call in to the show just prior to its airing and/or while it is live). Nor is there editing of it as it is a live show (unlike with their own shows where the final production for broadcast will likely only show the best readings and edit out or not show at all the less successful ones). I have not viewed and analyzed a sufficient number of such appearances on Larry King to make good deductions, although I cannot definitively rule out mind reading by itself from those appearances.

Some (but not all) of the mediums need to be more honest and forthcoming and admit they are not 100% accurate and the communications channels are not fully clear. Being more humble would make them more credible. Of course, some are outright frauds and some are self-delusional.

If these mediums can accurately tell people about specific events the departed souls say will happen to them in the future (as they sometimes communicate in readings), then we could rationally rule out all alternate explanations (and their combinations) and accept what these mediums tell us as true (though ruling out demonic and/or alien manipulation is not completely possible). This type of data is lacking (is not communicated that often) and to the best of my knowledge, has not been studied using scientific protocols.

® Dr. Gary Schwartz, a professor of psychology at the University of Arizona, has conducted a series of experiments on communications with the dead (Link: <http://veritas.arizona.edu>). His results thus far are that mediums are in fact communicating with departed souls and further experiments are to be done in the future.

Of course there are many other mediums who either do not possess this gift to the same degree (probably only a handful do in North America) or not at all. And some we can be reasonably sure are being fraudulent. But we should be careful not to group the best mediums with the mediocre ones or scam artists.

The ultra-skeptics will argue that there is no evidence to support communication with the dead and all information received can be accounted for by (1), (2), and (3). The ultra-skeptics are atheists (though some will claim to be agnostic) and follow a very orthodox approach to science who instead of saying the evidence is not strong enough to support the claims the mediums are making, just dismiss it all as fraud. This is despite the fact they have not been able to make the case for fraud. Alternative explanations such as telepathy are not even considered since these people are too close-minded to even contemplate telepathy might possibly exist. It is good to be a skeptic (I consider myself one) and all should be encouraged to engage in healthy skepticism but to be so stubborn and narrow-minded so that you dismiss anything which does not fit your particular view of the world as simply being fraud is ignorant and self-defeating.

® Psychic mediums in the west who are claiming to be able to communicate with the dead are in conflict with the predominant Judeo-Christian beliefs of the societies they are in (for example, no belief in reincarnation in the dominant religions in the west). Further, they generally tell us there is a lag time typically of several decades where people connected to one another 'reunite' in the spirit world prior to their next incarnation which is not necessarily even taught in the major eastern religions. Because they are not just trying to go along with what most people already want or expect to hear, I think it gives them a bit more credibility. Unless, they are being forced to 'tow the line' laid down by psychic mediums historically so as not to be in disagreement with it.

® Psychiatrists (like Dr. Brian Weiss and others of high academic credentials) and psychotherapists, who do and have learned from past life regressions of their patients, have findings that are completely in agreement with and fully collaborate what the psychic mediums have been telling us about the nature of the afterlife and spiritual order. Though there is the small possibility of some other explanations to account for this, for example, conspiracy to perpetuate such a fraud, manipulation by alien beings or other entities for whatever reason(s), etc., I think we could pretty much rule out that the past life regression academics are engaging in fraud. So unless mediums knew of the results of past life regression going back in history and have thus tailored their 'messages' from the other side to be in accordance with this all along, knowing this, some might reason this could be taken to validate an afterlife.

An excellent and very thorough overview (especially historical) and analysis for mediumship in the scientific literature (as well as much of the other life after death evidence) is given in Dr. David Fontana's book, "Is There An Afterlife?".

Other

There is no adequate scientific explanation for the vast array of psychic phenomena. It has not been quantified by science, but demands some sort of explanation. Orthodox science would have to make vast changes to it in order to accommodate paranormal evidence into existing scientific theories (and possibly later, scientific laws) - thus it demands such a high degree of authentication of any of the paranormal before it will 'throw out' existing science. But psychic phenomena which has a spiritual realm to it cannot simply be refuted just because it does not fit science's existing artificially limited scope. As far as life after death is concerned, only one case of the various types of life after death suggestive paranormal phenomena has to be true in order for there to be life after death. Some additional psychic phenomena, which are mostly indirect evidence for survival of consciousness and not already discussed, are mentioned below.

- The evidence from hospice medical personnel is that many (maybe even all?) people who are dying and can talk and are not in a drug induced and altered mental state report receiving death bed visitations from spiritual beings. This is found throughout the world and the experiences are very similar. Though hallucinations cannot be ruled out as the explanation, the few researchers in this area do think it is an actual spiritual experience. So this would be considered a possible evidence for an afterlife reported by the dying prior to death.

Some of the interesting and unique findings are:

- There are rare cases of the care-giver receiving the same vision as the dying person.
- The more lucid visions tend to be in the people dying who are in the best physical state (therefore cannot simply be attributed to due to confusion, hallucinations, etc.).

- The dying person becomes more lucid prior to death (this is more readily observed in the very sick, in those with dementia, etc.).
- Unlike with NDEs, there are no hellish visions or visitations.
- Often the dying report seeing a bright light.
- Animals such as dogs, cats, and birds often behave different around the time of death of the person - like they know or are influenced.
- Clocks right there or nearby sometimes stop at the time of death (tend to do so more so than they normally do).
- There are reports of the person just deceased appearing at the moment of death to someone at a different location.

- After death communications directly (ie. not from mediums, etc.) from loved ones that have died (usually recently) is commonly experienced by people. The most common types are sensing a presence of the departed one, feeling a touch probably of the departed person, hearing the voice of the departed person, or seeing the departed in a partial or solid form. I doubt if all could simply be dismissed as some form of grief induced hallucination every time - but neither can we rule out this explanation in general for many of the experiences. The reason (spiritual) for these experiences would likely be to reduce the grief to the person(s) still living and further to show them there is an afterlife and that later they may reunite with their departed loved one(s) there.

There is also induced after death communication (Link: <http://www.induced-adc.com>) and there appears to be some evidence that the same information from deceased to different receivers (people here on earth) has been given in work done by psychotherapist Dr. Allan L. Botkin.

- Instrumental Transcommunication such as electronic voice phenomena (EVP) - to be elaborated on further soon.
- Materializations of spirit forms and ectoplasm.
- ESP and remote viewing (clairvoyance) have been tested and shown to have some evidence for them, although not strong enough to be considered proof for their existence.

- People having premonitions of bad events prior to their occurrence and as a result are often able to avoid a negative outcome.

- Also, the brain may be a 'reducing valve'. Something that eliminates from a souls consciousness all that serves no purpose in the present life. Thus when the brain dies, the reducing valve is removed and ones mind experiences a much greater level of consciousness. This would account for dying people remembering their whole just completed life in an instant with great detail, clarity, and understanding.