

**OUT-OF-THE_BODY, NEAR-DEATH
AND SUPPOSED AFTER-DEATH EXPERIENCES:
A JIGSAW PUZZLE OF EVIDENCES**

Researchers and scholars in parapsychology who adhere to the spiritualistic hypothesis attribute great importance to the proofs of identification that a deceased person is supposed to give us, to the “crossing correspondences” through which he tries to demonstrate his independence from mediums, to the fact that he speaks about things which are unknown to the people who are present, to the fact that in his way of expressing himself he could demonstrate that he keeps his old, well known personality with his less imitable nuances and so on.

I have no doubts that all these considerations have their weight but I should simply remark that, nevertheless, many people remain sceptical when the supposed defunct starts to talk about himself and testifies to his experiences.

It is as if the same personality ought to be considered truthful until he proofs his identity and not so when he begins to tell us something about his new condition of life.

What specially generates perplexity in many people is the typical anthropomorphisms of the description that the supposed defunct give us of the spiritual world.

It is true, nevertheless, that they explain that their world has a mental nature and that all the realities that can be experimented in that world appear more or less similar to the realities of this terrestrial one because the defunct’s mentality, at least in the first stages of his evolution, is still conditioned by a whole patrimony of images of terrestrial life.

This is a phenomenon analogous to what happens in our dreams. The after-death experiences would be similar to those, so to say, of a “shared dream”.

It is a common experience that a smoker dreams of himself smoking; it is a rare but verified experience that friends meet in a “shared dream” in the same mental midst, both smoking a cigar; but most people are decisively shocked by the idea that a ravening smoker who has entered the other dimension can have the experience of smoking mental cigars due to his mental habits that still condition him at least for a certain time at the beginning.

Anyhow, if the analogy with dreams appears too vague, if the witnesses of after-death experiences in their quality of defunct can still appear too... phantom-like and so rather elusive, we can nevertheless find some confirmation to what they tell us in the testimony of other subjects who have at least the advantage for us of being, so to say, within reach.

They are the testimony of persons we know well and in whom we know that we can trust because we have experienced their honesty, their mental balance and critical sense, their clearness of mind and self-analysis and so on.

Who are such persons? They are either dying men and women or clairvoyants who are near them when they are dying.

They can be persons who have been very close to death almost reaching the gates from which there is no return - subjects clinically dead and subsequently reanimated and other cases close to these ones.

Eventually they can be the so called astral projectors: subjects who have the so called out-of-the-body experiences, either once in their lives or commonly.

We can say in a few words that those persons who respectively have the above mentioned kinds of experiences not only converge in their testimony but also give us a relative confirmation of what the supposed communicating defunct generally testify about their new experiences in the spiritual world.

Here somebody could put forward an objection: there is no doubt about the seriousness of these persons who live close to us and whom we know well; but what about their mental balance during experiences in which the normal state of consciousness appear to be undoubtedly altered?

I don't want to ignore the real importance of such an objection, but I also ask myself whether it is an alteration for better or for worse.

We are not in something like a TV quiz show and there is no compère – no *deus ex machina* as Kant would have said – who can tell us whether “the answer is correct” or not: so the only qualified people who can be asked to value those experiences are the same subjects who actually have them.

Who can value our normal experiences of waking life if not ourselves, persons who usually have them and are having them at this moment?

We are accustomed to defining altered in a pejorative sense the inner experiences of the fool and even those we have at night when we dream, in spite to the eventual element of deeper truth that some of these experiences, either psychopathologic or oneiric, can contain – when we have either a telepathic hallucination, or a precognition, or a significative intuition.

But what could justify us looking down, for instance, on the experiences of the mystic? The fact that we have not such experiences at all is decisively not to our advantage.

Reasonable humility ought to induce us indeed to have the right to speak to the mystic: but that would also imply to try to make ourselves as receptive as possible in order to let ourselves to be carried more and more inside the inner spirit of that characteristic experience.

Certainly not everything in mysticism has the same value; nevertheless the true mystics will reasonably agree among themselves in testifying to inner experiences that will appear more or less similar.

It is impossible, of course, to attribute real objectivity to such experiences in a field where instruments of quantitative measurements are not suitable. In any case we could attribute to these experiences a remarkable intersubjectivity at least: this intersubjectivity could result, in some way, analogous to the one we can have in our experience of ethical, esthetic, religious values and so on.

Nobody could affirm that when we talk about morals, religion, poetry etc. all the opinions of each person have the same value.

Here, at least in a general way, to the butcher's opinion about music, for instance, cannot be attributed the same value given to the musician's, to the critic's, to the specialist's point of view, except in the case of a butcher who is at the same time a fine and learned music amateur.

But in a general way the butcher's opinion will be precious in connection to everything concerning his useful and honourable profession. Here authority ought to be attributed mainly to the person who has realized, that is, authentically experienced it.

But let us come back to the various experiences of “discarnate life”. For the time being we can call them so, in order to name them all with the same comprehensive term. We can also assign to such persons the burden of giving to their so typical experiences a first definition.

If we question such witnesses about all these varieties of experiences which are different and converging at the same time, they will tell us that in such inner experiences there really are so many elements and moments of indeterminacy, of confusion, of obscurity, of opacity, but so many elements and moments of undoubted clearness as well: clearness that appears to be decisively superior to the clearness that characterises our normal experiences of waking life.

Concerning the elements that in these experiences appear to be the clearest ones, all the experiences confirm each other.

In the face of this mutual confirmation, what could we reasonably do, we who are temporarily excluded from such experiences? Our attitude will be more or less similar to the attitude of a judge who was not present when a crime was perpetrated but who questions all witnesses, checks the truthfulness of everyone, values the attestations and compares them in order to make his ideas clear about how things really happened: it is in this way that he will acquire a personal conviction on which he will base even a binding sentence – a very severe one.

Such a comparison is especially important when one is interested in defining the experiences of discarnate life. An analogous comparison is possible not only between the experiences of the supposed defunct and those of the subjects who have been clinically dead and subsequently reanimated but is also possible between the supposed defunct and the astral projectors as well.

It is also possible between the projectors and the clairvoyants (and even no clairvoyants) who can perceive the presence of somebody who bilocates himself in another place in the clearest and most discernible way.

Eventually it is possible between the visions of the dying persons and those of clairvoyants who are near them.

All these data which appear in such a variety of intersubjective ways will probably have at last a properly objective verification when psychical emanations, which have been matter of subjective experiences and attestations, achieve such a concreteness as to be able to impress for instance the photographic plate.

After all the theoretic premises I would like to give an example. The supposed defunct seem to attest that they are themselves again in the other world in human shape, more or less in the same usual appearance and even, so to say, more or less similarly “dressed”.

Moreover they tell us that they see the defunct appearing in similar way. Such affirmations appear to be the most suitable to arouse scepticism if not hilarity. But let us consider things in a calmer way. A phenomenon which appears not to be very different occurs during our dreams. Why? An explanation could be that the contents of our dreams are conditioned by our mental habits.

During our dreams we feel and see ourselves just as we are accustomed to seeing ourselves and feeling in our normal waking life. Why could it not happen so during that collective dream *sui generis* that after-death experience could be?

The defunct would continue to feel themselves, and then to become concrete, to be and exist, therefore to appear, more or less in the same way in which they were accustomed to be, to feel themselves, to appear during their terrestrial life.

In fact many dying persons see their beloved relatives and friends, already dead, appearing near their beds to welcome them in the new dimension of life, to comfort them, to instruct them.

The dying persons could be suspected to be delirious, but the clairvoyants who are present and are physically and mentally healthy attest the same apparitions.

It is in the same human shapes that the supposed defunct often appear during mediumistic séances when they seem to materialise themselves in such a way as to be

matter of an objective verification, mainly photographic. Even many subjects who have had experiences very close to death attest that they have seen deceased persons, especially beloved ones, just in the same human shape.

So far we have considered the attestations of the supposed defunct: that is of personalities who for obvious reasons always appear to us indefinable in some way.

We have above considered the attestations of clairvoyants: that is of persons who are much more within reach for us and can be known.

But in both cases we can remark that we have to deal with the attestation of an ideoplastic phenomenon – that of giving to one’s own astral energy the same human and even “dressed” shape that the corresponding physical body could either have or have had.

Such an ideoplastic phenomenon is directly experienced in his own person by a subject that is “other” to the subject who reports it.

Let us consider, now, the experiences of the astral projectors. These persons, who can be very close to us and perfectly controllable by us, have another advantage in this perspective: they can testify for those experiences as directly experienced in their own persons.

So the subject who lives the experience and the subject who testifies and reports it are just one and the same subject.

Moreover the projectors give us evidence of how they live in their own persons spontaneous creation of a parasomatic body, which indeed appears to be very similar to the physical body from which they came out.

So they give us evidence of how the same “clothing” of the parasomatic body is taking shape.

They all confirm to us that we are dealing with an essentially spontaneous phenomenon, mostly very rapid when not even instantaneous, during which the consciousness doesn’t intervene unless it does it intentionally once the process has already begun.

Everything works as if the scheme of the somatic body, of its features, of its same clothing would be consigned into the unconscious part of the psyche just where mental habits appear to be nestled.

I have limited myself to an example only, one of the easiest: but rational proceeding always starts from the easiest and the most evident points.

I am convinced that such an example could open the way to a whole series of examples and, just in this sense, I think that he can claim such a larger exemplarity.