

THE EXPERIENCE ON THE BRINK OF DEATH AND THE HEREAFTER : THE VERDICT

BY

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Abstract : As the intensive care techniques improve, more and more patients are brought back to life from the frontier of clinical death. Some of them tell about their significantly intense experience when they seem to live and function outside their body. First, we shall present the various stages of a near death experience (NDE). We shall particularly explain why the observed phenomena during an NDE are troubling and destabilizing for the adepts of certain religions. Second, we shall analyze and interpret these phenomena according to different points of view. We then discuss life in the hereafter and exhibit some of its properties. In this paper we shall also raise the issue of premonitory dreams which constitute a mystery for scientists.

1 INTRODUCTION

Our birth initiates a process leading to our death. The concept of a life after death constitutes one of the founding principles of all the major religions. However, there remains to elucidate the most intriguing mystery: is there proof of the existence of a life after death? For many years, this mystery has generated a raging debate between the faithful and the skeptics, but the NDE has proved to be a powerful argument in favor of the existence of an afterlife.

First of all, we must explain the nature of a near death experience. According to the International Association for Near Death Studies (IANDS), this experience is defined as a lucid experience of an out of body conscious perception occurring at the moment of real death, the risk of death or in the wake of a critical medical case [30].

The experience of near death consists in that the spirit of the person in question leaves the body momentarily. In this out of body situation, the spirit can evolve within the spiritual world.

We may classify the NDEs into two major categories: the positive experiences and the negative experiences [29].

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1.1 Positive NDEs

The individuals who lived this experience reported that they soon regained consciousness, had the feeling of finding themselves outside their body and were able to perceive everything around them in detail (the efforts to reanimate them for example). Then, there follows the perception of a kind of tunnel with a very attractive light at its end, which is described as strong but not blinding. In the course of their journey through this tunnel, deceased relatives and/or a being of light are met. This meeting is characterized by intense feelings of love, joy and peace. Some witnesses reported that they were able to view a panoramic display of their entire life. Frequently, the more one approached the end of the tunnel the more the observed light took the shape of a forbidden barrier. At that instant, the subjects understood or were made to understand that they had to come back to earth and that their life must go on.

1.2 Negative NDEs

For the moment, the statistics show that the negative experiences are estimated at 4 to 5% of cases. Actually, it is not easy to determine the significance of such estimates for the simple reason that even those who underwent positive experiences found a great difficulty in expressing it, let alone those who underwent negative ones! Obviously, the person who saw 'Hell' during an NDE will never muster enough courage to express it and will rather seek to put together this perception of this experience of a deserved hell and his/her past causing to the subject a post-traumatic stress. It is to be noted that the statistics show that the negative NDEs often end in suicide attempts.

Generally speaking, the negative NDEs may be distinguished in three categories: infernal NDEs, meaningless NDEs and inverted NDEs.

1.2.1 Infernal NDEs

These are entirely the opposite of the positive experiences in that the subjects, instead of moving up to meet the light, they rather go down towards darkness where linger thousands of people screaming from heat and thirst in the presence of devilish beings. This situation is quite similar to our traditional vision of Hell and this is why we termed these NDEs infernal.

1.2.2 Meaningless NDEs

In the meaningless NDEs, the subjects will find themselves alone in an absolute eternal void which would trigger a feeling of terror, rather understandable. Sometimes, geometrical shapes are perceived in this nothingness from which ironic manifestations transpire. All the events happen as if the subjects are mocked, giving them the impression that eventually, nothing has meaning, nothing ever existed, neither the world nor life nor family nor profession and that all is but illusion, hence the feeling of a meaningless experience.

1.2.3 Inverted Experiences

In this category, the NDE takes place like a positive experience, but it is perceived negatively by the subjects. The same light mentioned above will be perceived as aggressive so much so that it is not the subjects who move towards the light but rather, it is the light that moves towards them to take possession of them. This light is described as white, milky and more or less disgusting. The feeling of dissolving in this light by the subjects is perceived in a dramatic way which entails a great fear of disappearing in an infinite space.

We must note that the events mentioned in the testimony of the subjects experiencing the NDEs are quite current and repetitive. Such NDEs are so universal in nature that similar accounts have been registered in all countries.

Many editors [16] have published the accounts by those who experienced clinical or temporary death. The fact of raising the issue embodies a kind of open-mindedness which salvages our contemporary way of life as rooted in materialist thought.

Nowadays, there is agreement that the human being is a spirit incarnate in a body and that at death, the spirit continues to live. It is equally agreed that the soul or spirit may live on without its body but that a body cannot live without its soul. Many witnesses assert that during an NDE, they saw a kind of vapor escaping from the skull of the patient. The people who lived an NDE are quite numerous and the time has come when we should analyze this phenomenon rationally. Indeed, materialist thinking becomes obsolete when faced with those testimonies since now, we have scientific proof that our life proceeds without our body [9].

Those best informed skeptics with a closed mind now admit that they can no longer deny the existence of NDEs but rather, the discussion revolves around their significance.

Dr Moody was a pioneer in this domain though he started his investigation as a skeptic. His first book entitled “Life after Life” which was published in 1975 is considered to be the classic work that paved the way for modern research in this domain [16]. Since 1975 numerous studies were conducted in many countries. Let us particularly quote the works by K. Ring [19], M. Sabom [20], M. Morse [15] and the Australian Ch. Sutherlands [22] published in 1992 including a selected bibliography of more than 150 case-studies.

The studies have concerned persons who were brought back to life after a state of clinical death (stopped heart or flat encephalogram).

2 THE MAIN STAGES OF THE EXPERIENCE ON THE BRINK OF DEATH

The publication of Raymond Moody’s “Life after Life” in 1975 raised great concern the world over. Having collected several testimonies by patients who died clinically and came back to life, Raymond Moody proceeded to relate in detail the way the NDEs took place for the first time. Dr Moody discovered a striking similarity between the testimonies of 150 patients who lived such experiences. He was able to identify several different items recurring in the reports and he designed a typical model covering all the factors.

2.1 A Typical NDE Scenario

A given person is declared dead when s/he reaches the point of a great physical distress and hears her/his doctor confirming the patient’s death. S/he starts to hear a disturbing noise, a loud ringing or a siren after which s/he realizes that s/he is outside the physical body but still in the immediate surroundings and perceives her/his own body from a certain distance as a spectator. S/he is given to observe the efforts to resuscitate the body in a disturbing emotional state.

Soon, s/he regains control and starts to adapt to this strange situation. S/he notices that s/he still has a “body”, but of quite a different nature with powers that differ greatly from those of the body left behind.

Following this, the patient starts a journey along a dark tunnel and dead relatives come to meet him or her, to guide and help. The spirits of dead relatives and friends are also perceived and more particularly, a loving and warm spirit who was never met previously is then perceived. It is -a being of light- who asks a non verbal question about the evaluation of the patient’s entire life, helping in

this evaluation by displaying an instantaneous panoramic view of the major events of her/his existence. In a way, s/he feels that s/he is approaching a kind of barrier apparently representing the border between life and death. However, s/he feels the need to return to earth because the instant of death has not yet come and hence, s/he will resist the return to earth since s/he is in the throes of afterlife. Submerged by intense feelings of joy, love and peace s/he will join the physical body and live again in spite of it all.

Upon her/his return to earth, s/he will find it very difficult to tell about this experience for two reasons. On the one hand, no adequate human terms can be found to describe the experience in the netherworld and on the other, s/he would feel annoyed to tell about it for fear of ridicule. However, this experience will affect the behavior deeply, especially regarding the conception of death and its relation with life [16].

It must be noted that statistically, Moody's model of a typical experience represented the persons who lived positive experiences only. Indeed, witnesses of negative experiences are quite rare for the reasons we mentioned in §1.2.

The researchers who focused on this phenomenon unveiled a certain number of essential traits or common denominators shared by numerous experiences at the brink of death. It must be emphasized that the resulting statistics based on the variables of age, sex, race, profession, educational level and religion have no incidence on the number of NDEs and none on their content. At times, the visions reported by certain patients show that those factors contradict their religious convictions.

2.2 Testimonies and Account of the Main Feature of an NDE

In what follows, we present the testimonies of a few people who lived an NDE out of which eleven main traits were made out. Since the testimonies are coherent and repetitive, we shall limit ourselves to no more than two testimonies for each case. The essential traits of these NDEs include several stages.

• Hearing the Announcement of Death

The first stage mentioned by R. Moody is what he termed "*hearing the verdict*", meaning that the patient in a state of clinical death is given to hear and see perfectly the doctors announce the verdict of death though it is in principle impossible for him to feel anything.

Dr Sabom cites the case of a lady who was in the throes of death following an internal hemorrhage two weeks after the birth of her first child.

« *In the emergency room, I felt I was leaving and said good bye. I had the impression that I was sliding away and I could hear them say that I was in a state of shock. I heard a nurse say that she could no longer feel my pulse, that I did not breathe and that I had passed away. Then, another nurse ordered to put me under intensive care.* » [20]

• Peace and Well-being

The second stage consists of a feeling of perfect calm accompanied by an end to suffering marked by lightness, total relaxation and well-being. According to K. Ring, 60% of the interviewed lived this stage of the experience and 71% of them literally used the terms '*peaceful*' and '*calm*' to describe the emotional aspect of their experience [19]. Moody for his part cited several excerpts from this kind of testimonials [16].

One lady said that following a heart attack : « *I began to feel wonderful, experiencing nothing other than peace, comfort, well-being and calm. I had the impression that all my troubles had ceased, thinking that everything was sweet, peaceful with no pain anywhere.* »

• **Hearing Sound Phenomena**

During the third stage, Moody asserts that some patients claimed to have heard an annoying sound going from “*a rather painful roar*” to “*a strong ringing*” and to “*an acute humming sound*” and “*a thundering noise*” before entering the dark zone (fifth stage). However, we must note that a large majority of patients only remember a feeling of complete silence.

• **Disembodiment (separation of the soul from the body)**

The fourth stage is the disembodiment experience with a modified sensory perception and a different awareness of time and space. In this respect, Moody cites two particularly interesting cases [16]. First, there is the account by a young man who reported that « *passers-by were coming to the site of the accident from different directions, and I observed them from the middle of the pavement which was rather narrow. Nevertheless, as they approached, they did not seem to notice me and continued to walk straight ahead. When they came close nearby, I wanted to move away to let them pass, but they walked through me.* »

A second account showed that *the intellectual and sensory perceptions were modified and became hyper-developed* : « *Our mind becomes marvelously clear. My thinking took note of everything and solved all the problems as it never happened before, without having to go over the same ideas more than once.* » Further, one lady reported that : « *when she wished to see a far away person, it was as if a searching head inside of me hurled me towards that person. I had the feeling then that if anything happened anywhere in the world, I could easily attend it.* »

• **Entering a Dark Tunnel**

In the course of the fifth stage, one enters a dark zone with a feeling of peace. This zone is often compared with a tunnel, a narrow valley, a barrel or a cave... Here are two testimonies selected from those presented by Moody [16] :

- the case of a man who fell unconscious following a serious illness who reported : « *I found myself in empty space and in complete darkness. It is difficult to explain, but I had the feeling of sinking in that dark emptiness. However, I was fully conscious and it was as if I had been immersed in an airless cylinder, in a limbo: I was here and elsewhere at the same time.* »

- the case of a lady who neared death, following a traffic accident : « *I felt absolute peacefulness and I found myself in a tunnel made of concentric circles... ».*

• **Meeting Guides or Departed Persons (relatives or deceased friends)**

These characters attributed the role of guides or counsels will show up. They are close deceased people: relatives or friends, old neighbors, acquaintances or even unknowns who communicate by telepathy, thought exchanges or instant emotions. Moody reports the testimony by a man who was welcomed in the hereafter by a friend who had died recently before him : « *As soon as I had left my body, I had the vivid feeling that Bob stood nearby... He was there, but without his earthly body. The latter was more of a translucent entity, giving the impression that he had all his limbs, arms and legs, but I cannot say I was seeing him in a physical way.* »

• **Meeting a Being of Light**

A common event is the meeting with a shining light. This light is shapeless and cannot be perceived as a being often represented according to the patient’s faith as *Jesus, Buddha, Krishna*, etc... This being will cause the panoramic view of the newcomer’s elapsed life to appear.

• **Panoramic View**

The eighth stage is extremely curious in that the deceased person is given a panoramic view of her/his entire life and s/he judges all her/his deeds. Moody gives the example of a young woman who gave a very detailed account of her experience. According to her, it was the presence emanating from the magnificent light (stage 8) which coached her into judging her own life and to

review all the events that characterized it. She saw herself as a child, breaking a toy that she liked, then as an adolescent in high school. The review is chronological in nature, with certain aspects emphasized by the luminous presence ever at the side of the young woman. The importance of love and knowledge are clearly made out by the being of light : « *I was there and I could really see all those events and everything took place rapidly, giving me nonetheless enough time not to miss any of them. However, this did not take much time overall, at least that was the feeling I had. First there was the light, the review of the past and then the return to the light. I gather that it all took no longer than five minutes, probably more than thirty seconds, but I really cannot say any more.* » Generally speaking, after the review of the past, there is the return to the being of light for self-evaluation.

• **The Barrier of Light**

At a given time, the patient encounters a luminous barrier resembling a door or even a wall, a kind of border or boundary and s/he has a strong urge to return to the earthly body. We find in [25] the following testimony : « *Jean identified his last journey as surrounded by different elements: the looming of a barrier that he was forbidden to transgress... he tried to reach it with his hand in vain; the presence of ancestors or parents: his grandmother, died when he was twelve and his father died when he was seventeen. He had the feeling that they looked at him judgmentally, but could not say anymore as there was no dialogue.* »

A lady interviewed by Moody declared that she found herself amid a marvelous scenery, a meadow of an intense luminous green and then, she reached a fence which she could not cross despite all her attempts. [16]

• **Reintegration of the Body**

The tenth stage gives an account of the return to life of the patients by reintegrating their body. The process is often instantaneous and violent. One man asserted : « *I was up there near the ceiling and I could see them trying to resuscitate me. When the electrodes were placed on my chest and my body jerked up, I fell like a dead weight and soon, I had reentered my body.* » A lady asserted : « *I had the feeling of being recalled, as if drawn by a magnet.* »

This return is often realized against the will of the patients who had felt so good in their new state that they no longer wished to come back to life... [16].

• **Incommunicability**

Each person who experienced an NDE finds it difficult to express it via the habitual language and the same goes for its emotional components. More particularly, Dr Moody cited the testimony of a young woman who tried to analyze the reasons for this incommunicability : « *You see, it is hard for me to explain that because all the words I use apply to three dimensions. During my experience, I could not stop thinking that : 'My geometry classes had taught me that there were only three dimensions which I took for granted, but that was a mistake as there are more dimensions'. Indeed, the world we live in is three-dimensional, but the other world is not like that at all. This is why I am at pains to explain it. I am forced to use three dimensional words and to stick to reality, but that is not the way.* » [16]

In the following section, we shall attempt to analyze the different states of an NDE to deduce the pertinent information.

3 ASSESSMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FACTS OBSERVED DURING AN NDE

3.1 Failure of the Materialist Explanation

To this day, NDEs represent something new to science. Psychiatrists, neurologists and cardiologists searched for physiological causes and even tried to reproduce an NDE in laboratory via electric excitation of the brain, in vain. Other rationalists tried to explain the content of an NDE (hence the disembodiment experience) through the elaboration of “*phantasmagoric scenarios*”. However, this type of simplistic and reductionist explanation was strictly negated from the very start by the early studies conducted by the pioneers on NDEs such as R. Moody, K. Ring, M. Sabom etc... All of these authors demonstrated that the mere psychological explanations (disembodiment experience, phantasms, dreams, simple hallucinations etc...) were incapable of explaining the sequence of visions proper to the NDEs. One argument among others is that the phantasms are known to vary from one individual to the next whereas the content of NDEs’ testimonials shows remarkable similitude, whatever the culture, the age, the religion or the way of life of those telling about this experience.

The disembodiment phenomenon cannot be a hallucination since there were blind subjects who were able to depict the doctors’ actions in a very precise manner. One could then safely deduce that these patients did in fact observe their own carnal self from outside as they claimed. There were also those who left their body, moved about the intensive care room and were even able to read the stickers on the ceiling fans. They were even able to reproduce conversations which took place in adjoining rooms and beyond, in their integrality [9].

It is finally obvious that the materialistic image of the body and of the brain as the producer of thought has become obsolete. Indeed, a new conception of the body and soul is emerging. This conception which is spiritual and scientific at the same time maintains that a human being also incorporates an abstract entity which remains the seat of consciousness after death. Eradicating the spiritual component underlying the NDEs is thus bound for failure.

Flowing from the above considerations, there are certain aspects which deserve our attention.

- If one day we were able to transplant a brain on another patient, the transplant will absolutely have no effect either on the personality or the behavior of the subject. Indeed, in the disembodiment state of the NDE, **handicapped persons asserted that they had regained their physical integrity and their normal functional capabilities (no incapacitation was present)**.
- The human shape remains as it was after the disembodiment experience (to wit the perception and recognition of deceased relatives by the NDE witnesses).
- Our conscience may access levels of reality other than that of the ordinary physical one.
- The soul does have a material constitution made of a subtle substance. Some intensive care specialists reported having «*felt and observed smoke, vapor or other ‘entities’ leaving the body of those leaving us.*» [9]
- This subtle material substance constituting the soul is made of matter very different from what we know since everything demonstrates that its specificities belong to another space-time.

Regarding this issue, some researchers postulated that the soul (our double so to speak) which is immortal and indivisible is constituted by particles resembling the neutrinos a great deal. Their argument was that certain patients who came to, had been able to go through solid objects (walls, glass, etc...). Other more daring researchers have even tried to establish a model for the soul in order to explain the phenomena characterizing the NDEs. We shall particularly cite the model attempted by R. Dutheil [11].

3.2 Towards a Model for Conscience

In Quantum Mechanics, it has been shown that if an elementary particle is split into two half-particles, the latter move away from each other at the speed of light. Further, when the spin direction of one part is modified, the spin of the other part would also be modified in the same manner. In other words, the two particles will communicate the position to each other instantaneously thanks to information traveling at a speed superior to the speed of light. Thus, matter is not totally deprived of consciousness which led R. Dutheil to elaborate a model attesting to the complexity of our world and to hypothesize the existence of a second complementary and symmetrical universe (parallel to ours) where speeds are always superior to the speed of light.

In that universe, our notion of time no longer applies since one can travel instantaneously in the past, the present and the future. This universe which he called “*super luminous time-space*” is composed only of information. It is, among other things the universe of the soul and the spirit and it can be defined as composed of ‘*tachyonic*’ (or super luminous) particles.

From this vantage point, the brain would not be the producer of thought but rather a kind of interface allowing the latter to act in the inferior luminous world. The world we perceive would then only be a holographic projection of the super luminous world.

Flowing from this model, the author provides an explanation for numerous phenomena which have irritated thinkers a great deal, such as the NDEs, prediction, survival after death and the like. According to the author :

- Death consists in the transfer of the soul to the super luminous space time. It would then be logical that sensations emanating from another time-space dimension be incommunicable since our language is not adapted for it.

- The actual seat for sensations is located in the super luminous space. Such organs as the eyes and ears are but the receptors of sensations without being their seat or origin. Then, there is no reason why an “unconscious” patient –according to our under luminous criteria- whose organs have stopped functioning, can still perceive sensations.

- Life rarely provides us with fully pleasing sensations because its daily emotional content is rather negative, characterized by stress, anguish, anger... At the moment of death, our soul is ridden of all the influences associated with the under luminous world. New sensations emanating from the super luminous world –that of total consciousness, order and information in its pure state- reach the subject. They can only be positive and pleasant, hence the feeling of well-being.

- The sound effects reported by some rare patients may be explained by the fact that when a subject is placed in a sound-proof room sometimes believes he is hearing loud noises while they really do not exist.

- The journey through the dark zone (*tunnel*) represents the transfer of the soul from the under luminous time-space to the super luminous time-space and this move indicates the crossing of the

light barrier. The soul is then impregnated with luminous particles, becoming luminous itself, and thus, it will perceive the outside only as dark.

- The disembodiment experience is nothing more than the return of the soul to the luminous time-space dimension i.e. to the universe of total information.

- Following the disembodiment experience, the deceased person has the feeling of being “*pure spirit*”. However, s/he is still attached to sub-luminous world by several links. Therefore, s/he has the need to create an environment in keeping with what he was familiar with in earthly life : marvelous scenery, meadows, rivers etc...

Although the attempt by Professor Dutheil seems laudable, it is still characterized by several shortcomings.

3.3 Criticisms of the Model

The criticisms touch upon several essential points :

R. Dutheil considers that during an NDE, “*the partial sub-luminous soul attempts to penetrate the super-luminous universe in order to melt within the total soul*” [11].

We deal here then with two souls, one embedded in the carnal envelope and the second in the super-luminous space. He claims that all our deeds are dictated by the super-luminous soul and hence that all illnesses (particularly mental illnesses) are “*all illnesses of information processing. The patient no longer manages the information correctly or perceives disturbed information in the same way as a TV set displays unclear or distorted pictures*”.

■ We do not agree with R. Dutheil’s opinion that postulates two souls, one in the super-luminous dimension (total soul) and the other in our body (sub-luminous soul), one dictating it over the other. In our opinion, there is only one soul but it is doubled (cf. section 4.4.4.1) and it is the one which is embedded in our body. Information and instructions emanating from our soul are received by the brain which executes them. If the brain suffers from a neurological, biological or other defect, then the illness will appear since, as we established it earlier the brain is but a mere interface between the soul and the rest of the body.

Further, Dutheil’s model does not explain the phenomena observed in the course of a negative NDE for the following reasons :

■ In a “*meaningless*” NDE, the subject is within the vacuum, in absolute nothingness, perceiving no light, although the space he reaches is supposed to be that of light.

■ The model presented by Dutheil hypothesizes that the will of the deceased creates its own environment after death: everything that is observed can be created instantly in no time, but it can also be annulled likewise. In a positive experience, it is only natural that the deceased person enjoys the beautiful scenery encountered and that he would in no way delete that environment. In the case of an infernal NDE, the witnesses were not capable of ridding themselves of their horrible environment. [18]

■ In the case of a reverse NDE, the soul of the deceased has the feeling of regressing in the bottom of the tunnel whereas s/he is normally supposed to progress in the super-luminous universe in order to melt into total soul. The light which is supposed to be pleasant is rather milky white and disgusting.

- The tunnel which is described as a dark zone is seen as the consequence of the crossing of the light barrier by the soul while this barrier is hypothetical very much like the sound barrier.

- The model has no explanation for the meaning of the panoramic vision of the patient's life who judges his own deeds.

We must note that if the resuscitation is not accomplished within a short time, at least within the three first minutes, the patient will go from clinical death to biological death and the return to life will no longer be possible. Since the resuscitation time varies from one patient to the next, not all people can access all the stages of an NDE. We shall therefore consider -in our study- only those persons who underwent the most advanced stages of the experience on the brink of death.

3.4 Analyses and Interpretations

In order to make out pertinent information derived from the frontiers of death, we feel that it would be convenient to distinguish the stages characterizing the experience into two categories: the stages before entering the tunnel and those occurring after crossing it.

3.4.1 Stages Preceding the Entering of the Tunnel

The statistics show that in these first stages :

- 100% of the witnesses were able to report and describe exactly all the details of their resuscitation, sometimes repeating the words uttered at that time by the doctors and nurses, while they were not supposed to hear anything since they were entirely unconscious.

- All the witnesses without exception declared that they underwent a modification of their intellectual and sensory faculties which became hyper-developed.

- Their human nature (reason, memory, emotions etc...) is preserved to a point that they never realize that they died.

3.4.2 Stages Following the Crossing of the Tunnel

According to the gathered accounts, all of the questioned witnesses without exception reported about :

- Their failure to describe their experience after crossing the tunnel, correctly: that is the "*incommunicability*",

- A sensation of peace and well-being or of horror depending on whether the experience was positive or negative.

Among those who survived the most advanced stages of an NDE, there is agreement on :

- An encounter with guides or close deceased persons,

- An encounter with a Being of Light who displays a panoramic view of the past life and who coaches the newcomer into evaluating his terrestrial life,

■ The existence of a barrier which stops the patient, a kind of ultimate barrier between life and death.

Regarding the latter point, it is possible to postulate the existence of three universes and not only one:

- our material and perceptible universe,
- transient universe (apprehended by those who have experienced an NDE),
- the universe of the soul (that of the hereafter).

Indeed, the subjects who were declared dead by their doctors have all reported that after journeying through the tunnel, they had found that they were in a world different from ours (transient universe) then they were stopped by the barrier. In this intermediary world, there are two possibilities, either to return to life (reintegrating one's body) or dying (crossing the barrier). This world then plays the role of an interface between our own material world and the hereafter ensuring the passage of the soul before its integration to this world...the world of death. Each of these three universes has its own specific space time.

3.4.2.1 Interpreting Incommunicability

In our opinion, the journey through the tunnel achieved by the deceased consists in a transition from our three-dimension space towards the transient universe which certainly possesses space time attributes different from that of our.

It is known that in the practice of multidimensional data analysis in Applied Mathematics, if we want to express a data belonging to a large dimension space into a lower dimension one, there will be in general a loss of information due to the transition between the two spaces.

Let us consider for instance a cloud of n points in a three-dimension space where each point is defined by the usual three coordinates. The structure of this cloud can be easily described in our space. Let us assume that we want to give to a bi-dimensional being a detailed description of what we observe. In order to reach this goal, we have to project the cloud on his proper space (i.e. the plane). This projection will consequently lead in general to a distortion or an information loss. This latter corresponds, for a given couple of points to either a relative increase or decrease of the distance between them.

Therefore, transferring information from a multi-dimensional space to a three-dimensional one via a projection will always lead to some distortion. This will be the same when we move from a three-dimensional space to a bi-dimensional one as shown above.

Note : However, we may encounter a minimal or even no distortion in very particular cases and under some conditions (especially depending on the shape of the projection and its direction) hence the preservation of the information.

It would then be only normal in the case of an NDE that the witnesses' sensations emanating from another time-space be incommunicable because our language itself is made of sensations based on a three-dimensional image of our reality. This incommunicability is then not the fruit of any fraud or lies, but it rather constitutes the proof of the patients' sincerity who are the first to be stupefied by their experience. Indeed, they are unable to explain their sensations with our three-dimensional logic nor can they describe their sensations since our language is not applicable.

A first deduction transpires from our analysis, namely *the transient universe equates a multi-dimensional space*.

Some survivors reported their encounter with close deceased persons even before ascending the tunnel. In other words, the encounter took place in our three-dimensional space. Thus we can deduce *that our space or universe is reachable by the deceased and that it is entangled within the transient universe.*

Furthermore, the survivors who lived the panoramic stage reported that they viewed all the details of their life. Obviously, this process cannot last a few seconds or even minutes. We may thus deduce that *we deal here with a time quite different from the usual physical one.* On one hand, this conclusion may be supported by the fact that witnesses asserted that they felt their experience lasted an eternity. On the other hand, the space in question has certainly a geometry different from our. In addition, it is admitted that it is the geometry of each space that defines its proper time. So time does not flow the same way when we move from one universe to another.

We are thus led to this conclusion : *the transient universe as a multidimensional space is entangled in our proper universe. In the former, the time flow is quite different from the flow of our usual time. Therefore, in this context, the tunnel appears as a hidden dimension common to the two spaces, that achieves a kind of interconnection.*

The third universe, (that of the soul) for its part, *is impossible to apprehend because biological death is irreversible. However, we are certain it is multidimensional but the present data do not allow us to draw any conclusion regarding its time-space specificities which are radically different from those we know.* We shall examine one of its specificities in section 4, by focusing on matters other than the observations reported by witnesses.

3.4.2.2 Interpreting the Sensation of Peace or of horror

Several researchers who wanted to explain the sensation of peace or horror during an NDE focused on purely psychological considerations : « at the moment of death, the soul rids itself of stress progressively » hence the feeling of peace and well-being in the case of a positive NDE or « an increase of the degree of fear of what will happen » in a negative NDE. To our mind, if we set aside any spiritual dimension from our deeds, we will not be able to explain why there are positive experiences in certain cases and negative ones in others. Indeed, all experiences should logically take place identically.

3.4.2.3 Explaining the Being of Light and of the Panoramic Vision of Life

In all the testimonies, the controversy is centered around the identity of the Being of Light which is interpreted according to the religious beliefs of the subject as an angel, a prophet: Jesus, Buddha or Krishna etc... We shall in this respect review the case Alexa's experience with an NDE (1973) excerpted from the witness data base of the Near Death Experience Research Foundation : NDERF [32].

« The review of my life has started. Absolutely everything I thought, did, said, hated, whether I helped or not was displayed much like on a home cinema. The extent to which I had been cruel to people, how I could have helped them, how I had been wicked with animals ...[...] I fell face down with shame. I was given to see how the consequences of my actions to help or their lack had affected the others and their life. It was only then that I realized that every small decision or choice touches the whole world. The feeling that I failed the Savior was only but real. Astonishingly, despite the horror I was in, I felt the compassion and the acceptance of my limitations by the Savior and the others.

In the course of this review, the evil being was present. [...] Each time I made a mistake or missed something, this pleased him a great deal and he shouted : 'There! Do you see how she failed?

*Why didn't she do better or help better? Should she not be punished?' I was devastated. My few small good actions could not satisfy God's perfect norms. I did deserve all that I reaped. When it was all over, a voice roared : 'Is she covered by the lamb's blood?' Answer : 'yes!!!'
Once the Court had disappeared, the evil being, Satan screamed, whistled, shrank and 'Pouf' disappeared. Everything vanished except for Jesus Christ who gazed at me with incredible love!»*

According to this account, we may unambiguously understand that Alexa is not a practicing Christian (« *the feeling that I had let my Savior down was only but real* »). Nonetheless, she was convinced to be in the presence of Jesus « *who gazed at her with an incredible love.*» But one must ask how the evil being can appear side by side with whom she considered to be '*the Son of God*'. He is even introduced as his equal in condemning Alexa's sins. Would this lady have badly reported her experience or falsified it? This holds little truth because there are other accounts which corroborate this by asserting the encounter with Jesus.

This testimony which seems to be inconsistent is quite normal since the events took place in a multidimensional universe (after crossing the tunnel). As soon as the soul reintegrates the body, a transition is operated towards our three-dimensional universe. Therefore, the information which will be explored in the first universe will be entirely distorted for the reasons mentioned above.

We must note that in an NDE, the panoramic stage must take place in a standardized manner for all subjects and there is no reason why the Being of Light should vary in accordance with the beliefs of the individual who is dead clinically. The Being of light will then certainly be neither Jesus, nor Buddha nor Krishna... We shall reveal the identity of this Being in section 4.

3.5 Rethinking Death

According to our analysis, we may safely assert that death is only a simple transition towards a different plane which exists elsewhere, i.e. an existence displacement. Indeed, why should the presence of the physical body or its absence matter if we continue to live on without losing our senses or our identity?

In an interview, Dr Moody declared : « *Whenever any survivor was asked about her/his opinion on her/his NDE, the answer would be unequivocal that true life was in the hereafter and that life on Earth was but a dream when compared with it.*»

The accounts by the persons who lived an NDE are rather disturbing and even destabilizing for the adepts of some religions, hence the need to confront the Holy Scriptures, leaving it to the discretion of the reader to judge what is pertinent and what is not.

4 LIFE AFTER DEATH ACCORDING TO THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Religion attempts to answer the crucial questions posed by Man to wit the meaning of his presence on Earth, the creation of the world, the hereafter and life after death as well as morals and happiness... Well prior to the most ancient civilizations and since the dawn of humanity, religious beliefs have always played a crucial role in man's life be it on the social or the individual levels. The concept of life after death has been a perpetual question which intrigued the mind unceasingly. This is the reason why even in primitive religions and beliefs man has always believed in life after death. However, the most complex beliefs greatly differ in their conception of the ultimate goal of humanity.

A great number of Westerners seem to be ready to show less dogmatism and more openness at once. They accept doctrines emanating from diverse origins without worrying much about their compatibility. Reincarnation for instance is a stranger to Christianity, although about 25% of West Europeans believe in it and still believe in the resuscitation of the dead, Paradise, Hell and even Purgatory.

In what follows, we shall proceed to a review of the opinions of a few religions regarding life after death while limiting our study to the most widespread religions.

4.1 Life after Death according to Hinduism and Buddhism

Early in the fourth millennium before our era, Hinduism was one of the most ancient religions in the world to advocate the reincarnation doctrine. According to it, there exists a spiritual principle which may be compared with the soul or the soul within each living being, human or animal, which, instead of disappearing with death would rather reincarnate the body of different living beings successively. The reincarnations are frequent, occur soon after death and are renewed for as long as the soul has not reached the sufficient perfectness that would allow it to escape from the eternal birth and death cycle. The actions accomplished during one existence would determine the fate of the soul in its new reincarnation: that is the law of Karma. [10]

The ultimate goal for Hinduism is to escape the infernal reincarnation cycles in order to vanish from Earth and integrate the “*cosmic self*”. The liberation of the soul is realized by its return to the Supreme principle, the union with Brahma, wherefrom it emanated.

In the sixth century before our era, Buddhism adopted the reincarnation doctrine without asserting the existence of a sovereign God defined by Hinduism as the Absolute Soul. In Buddhism, man has within himself no eternal dimension which would survive him after death. Rather, he is called upon to escape the reincarnation cycles and to disappear into nothingness: this “*extinction*” will be responsible for an end to his terrestrial sufferings. [10]

According to Buddhism as well as Hinduism, reincarnation always takes place in accordance with the law of Karma. In reincarnation, the body is only a “*vehicle*”, a “*garment*” which the soul discards with each new incarnation.

All the major Eastern religions such as Taoism, Confucianism etc... have more or less adhered to the reincarnation creed and nowadays, the latter is flourishing.

According to the Bardo Thodol, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, a shrilling sound is heard by the agonizing person (roaring or whistling) [8]. The deceased person finds himself enveloped by a grey foggy light and realizes that he is endowed with a new shining body. Then three days and a half later, the subject is surrounded by a strong light, knowing neither where he is nor where he is going. To be delivered from the rebirths cycle, he must recognize the light surrounding him, but this can be done only if he has practiced spiritual exercises during his entire life. If not, he would go to the next stage where he will be met and terrified by violent apparitions which are in actual fact manifestations of his own thought and without material reality. Were the subject not afraid of these observations, he would be delivered. On the contrary, if he does not, he falls into a vortex leading to reincarnation. This is the third intermediary state. If he resists the temptation of reincarnation, he will be delivered. The subject is delivered through the annihilation of his personality, i.e. of his own personal ‘*ego*’.

The ‘*reincarnationist*’ theses pose several important problems and we shall review some of them:

- In the course of the ten last decades, the human population on Earth has increased in a dramatic way and today, it numbers close to seven billion individuals. There is then a permanent addition of individuals and each newborn needs a soul. If the number of existing souls is inferior to that of the available souls resulting from reincarnations, we must then postulate a permanent provision of new souls never having been reincarnated on Earth. How could we then explain the source of these souls which must come from the dead according to the reincarnation theory?
- If we do reincarnate, how is it that the population continues to increase instead of remaining stable? Indeed, the death of someone conditions the birth of another!
- We are supposed to reincarnate in order to improve before disappearing. How can we then explain the fact that humanity is not improving apparently? Indeed, if we set aside the progress of technological and scientific knowledge, we cannot in actual fact state that evil has dwindled on Earth...
- In the reincarnation concept, the reincarnated soul would not keep the memory of past lives. Then, how would one try to improve oneself if there was no memory of shortcomings? Would that not be ambiguous?
- A person who committed wrongful deeds in his life can even be reincarnated as a plant or animal. But if that were the case, when the belief in God is denied, who would then judge the past life of a person and send him back to this world in a new body?
- In the course of the NDEs, several witnesses asserted that they had met their close deceased relatives or friends who died several years ago. How could the reincarnation creed explain the encounter with those dead people who would normally have been reincarnated? This issue has embarrassed the Buddhists a great deal. Indeed, in the book: “Sleep, Dream, Death: exploring the soul with the Dalai Lama”, a debate was started between scientists and the former whose argument was in favor of a dream state and not an exit from the body. [21]

The Buddhists are unable to answer these questions rationally.

Notes :

1/ Extremely ambiguous situations may characterize “*the reincarnationist*” tenets. Indeed, a mother whose father died could be the mother of her own father if the soul of the latter were to be reincarnated in his grandchild’s body.

2/ According to their beliefs, men’s impotence, their illnesses and weaknesses originate from impure morals and are supposed to be punishments for previous evil deeds. For example, the reasons why a given person is poor or handicapped are justified by his or her behavior during a previous life.

All the evil deeds by a person in a previous life would be punished by poverty in the present one. In other words, people deserve what they get! This kind of attitude led many adepts of this doctrine to refuse to help others since to them misfortune is a deserved retribution for a former deed.

4.2 Life after Death in Judaism

The Torah tells little about the destiny of the dead simply because at that time, no one ever went down to the abode of the dead (signified in the Old Testament by the Hebrew term *shéol* and in the New Testament by the Greek term *hades*) and had come back, not even the most spiritual of prophets.

Therefore, death and the hereafter do not constitute a prime subject in the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, biblical opinions are not homogeneous and are even contradictory. On the one hand, human fate is perceived in a pessimistic way as shown by the two verses below:

- *Qohelet 3:19-20*

"Because the fate of the sons of men and the fate of the beasts are the same: As is the death of one so is the death of the others, and all have one spirit. Man is not higher than the beasts; because all is to no purpose. And all things go to one place: of earth they were made, and into earth they all return."

On the other, we encounter more optimistic verses indicating resurrection after death.

- *Isaiah 26:19*

"Your dead will come back to life, your corpses will rise again. Wake up and jubilate, you dwellers in the dust, for Your dew will be a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth anew to the shadows of the deceased."

In spite of this contradiction in the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish creed leaned towards the optimistic aspect that is resurrection. Whereas the Hebrew Bible shows some skepticism concerning the hereafter, the Talmud expresses the belief in the resurrection of the dead and the future world without reservations.

As it was emphasized by Professor Gabrielle Oberhànsli-Widmer [28], a Judaic scholar, belief in the hereafter takes the upper hand over detailed descriptions in rabbinical literature. Her extensive research in numerous Midrashim allowed her nonetheless to distinguish a few characteristics of the resurrection of the dead and the future world which she summed up in five points:

1/ Resurrection is imminent,

2/ it is corporal: this characteristic as well the one above are in fact common to all the monotheistic religions,

3/ the future world is collective for the whole Jewish people. In this respect, Talmudic teaching makes it clear that:

- *Mishna, Sanhedrin 10:1*

"The 'world to come' is that which shall follow the resurrection of the dead and all the children of Israel will have a right to it, including the criminals who were condemned by the justice of men or by divine justice."

This is also confirmed by the following Talmudic commentary which specifies that in the future world no Jew would be rejected because his own self will win it over his deeds.

- *Chagigah 15b*

"A Jew is always considered good in spite of sins he commits. just as the dirt on a nut only contaminates the shell while the kernel remains pure."

4/ Future life and the hereafter are linked in the country of Israel: the rabbis even drew a map of the hereafter and all the places on this map are part of the Israeli country. We thus find Celestial Jerusalem (an ideal copy of the Holy City), the Gahanna (gehinnom) etc...

5/ Future life represents a reward for a life deprived in exile:

Rabbinical tradition which inscribed faith in resurrection in Judaism, considers that the Apocalypse does not have only a disastrous aspect because the end of the world, far from being definite, signifies rather an ideal life of the whole elect people with their God.

In conclusion and based on the texts of the Torah and the Talmud, nothing precise can be deduced concerning the immortality of the soul. This was emphasized in "*The Jewish Encyclopedia*": « *The belief according to which the soul continues to exist after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical and theological speculations rather than a mere article of faith. Indeed, nowhere do the Holy Scriptures expressly teach this creed.* » [23] The Hebrew Bible does not clearly distinguish a body and a soul in Man, a distinction which finds its origin in Greek philosophy. According to the Bible, Man is wholesome which is well explained in the following verse :

- *Genesis 9:5*

"Besides that, your blood of your souls [*nephesh in Hebrew*], I will require it again."

(Here, the soul is seen as endowed with blood)

Thus, according to Judaism, the immortality of the soul is rather a pagan belief, foreign to the Scriptures and Tradition.

However, it cannot be denied that after the emergence of the NDEs and in spite of the flagrant contradictions in the Biblical accounts, both modernist Catholic and Jewish "exegetes" begin to admit that the soul is immortal: it does not perish when separated from the body in death, but will reunite with it in the Final Resurrection. Therefore, when the Torah deals with the creation of Man: **"and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life"** (Genesis 2:7), this breath is interpreted to be the soul which has a divine nature, thence it is immortal.

4.3 Life after Death according to Christianity

In fact, the Bible says very little concerning the dead. According to the Bible, the soul is mortal and the dead realize nothing. Therefore, the belief in the survival of the soul alone is of pagan origins. [24]

In the New Testament, the term "immortal" appears only once in St Paul and concerns only God. Orthodox theology equates death with sleep from which Christ will resuscitate us thanks to His Flesh of resurrection, the victorious human flesh by the Breath (*ruakh, pnevma*) of the Father and awaken us unto His Eternal Life.

In the Bible, the dead will remain dead and for now have no life anywhere in this vast universe. They will be resuscitated only during the resuscitation of all the Dead. The condition of the latter is clearly defined in Ecclesiast 9:5-6 where we read:

- *Ecclesiastes 9:5-6*

"For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun."

However, the Bible promises eternal life, stating that we are all mortal beings created from Earth's dust, and we are bound to return to it some day. But the Bible makes it clear that there will be a resurrection, i.e. the Day of Final judgment which will reveal what everyone did in good or omitted to do during terrestrial life.

Between death and resurrection, the Bible informs us that nothing happens and that is a period of waiting for Judgment:

- *Hebrews 9 :27*

"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."

According to the Bible, there is no activity, no accounting no knowledge and no wisdom in the grave. Death is then a state of non-existence. A psalm writer wrote that at a person's death, **"his spirit comes out, returns to the soil; that day his thoughts perish"** (Psalm 146: 4). In fact, according to the Bible, the soul is mortal and the dead feel nothing.

4.4 Life after Death according to Islam

From what transpired above, we can say that the world has been divided between the two great religious conceptions of life and death:

- On the one hand, the Eastern conception (Hindus, Buddhist, ...) which holds that death is only the result of the love of life and of the imperfection which engenders rebirth. Death then does not happen as an end, but is immediately followed by a new existence determined by good or bad deeds.

- On the other hand, the Western conception, Jewish or Christian which considers death as an irremediable breaking point, unique in an existence, affecting the individual's identity.

Whereas the Eastern religions hold that each new incarnation is the retribution of a wrong choice, the Jewish and Christian religions conceive that the soul is only a vital principle which disappears with the body.

None of these two conceptions brought any real improvements to the vision of the hereafter. Indeed, in the first one, there is a survival (via reincarnation) followed by total extinction once the soul had reached perfection. In the second, at death there is a simultaneous disappearance of both the body and the soul. In fact, both conceptions emanate from a particular view of reality and the soul and do not stem from a divine revelation.

The Islamic conception is quite different since it preaches the survival of the soul after death. It has the merit of distancing itself from the current religious models in implying the existence of another reality to wit *the reality of an eternal soul*.

Islam is the only religion of all the others, which provides the most details on what happens after death and what is to be found in the hereafter. According to the Islamic Faith, death is not an end but a beginning, a departure for another life...

4.4.1 Death according to Science and according to Islam

4.4.1.1 Death according to Science

According to science, death is defined as the complete and definite cessation of cerebral activity. In that state, the patient presents no reaction to the neurological examination: no response to pain, fixed pupils, non-spontaneous breathing...flat encephalogram.

4.4.1.2 Death according to Islam

In the same vein as the other religions, Islam distinguishes two parts: the physical body and the soul or conscience. The physical body is seen as the interface between the soul (which represents the person's identity) and the outside world. Death occurs when the soul leaves the body when the latter is no longer performing.

Islam holds that death is a natural threshold to be crossed in order to reach the next stage of existence. The biological death of a human being affects only his carnal body but not his identity. Then, there is no extinction of the being as it is advanced by the Jewish and Christian faiths as well as the Eastern religions. Rather, there is continuity of life towards a new space which we may term the universe of the hereafter.

Indeed, in one of Prophet Mohamed's Traditions ('Hadith') as reported by Omar Ibn Al Aziz it is stated :

“You have not been created for annihilation but for eternity, and you transit from an abode to another.” [5]

In other words, this 'Hadith' teaches that death is but a passage to another existence and that is the reason why the quasi-totality of the Muslim faithful accept it with relief, as a sign of Divine Mercy. Indeed, death is seen as a merciful release from an ephemeral existence. Another 'Hadith' states that **“The grave is the first stage of the Afterlife.”** [5]

In the Islamic tradition, terrestrial life has only an ephemeral nature because the real life is the one in the universe of the hereafter. Indeed, as was stated by Ali, son-in-law and a companion of the Prophet:

“People live in a state of sleep, and they realize it [*Intabahou*] only after they die.” [5]

The literal translation of the word '*intabahou*' is “*an abrupt stupefied awakening*”. Indeed, early in the disembodiment experience, the deceased patient realizes that he is in a new time-space location and becomes conscious of an abrupt change in his life. This realization is almost instantaneous, very much similar to waking up after a night of sleep when we rapidly register the intensity of light and the room temperature, then we evaluate our sensations (suffering or well-being) and recollect our memories, etc...

The amazement characterizing the move from a three-dimensional space (our terrestrial life) to a multi-dimensional space is due to the suddenness of death. Let us examine what the Qur'an has to say:

- *Sura 21, verse 40*

"Nay, but it will come upon them unawares so that it will stupefy them, and they will be unable to repel it, neither will they be reprieved."

This amazement also flows from our need to locate ourselves in space. Undoubtedly, it is the reason for the question invariably asked by accident victims when they come to: “Where am I ?” and this is what happens in death and in an NDE.

4.4.2 Nature and Characteristics of the soul

The nature of soul has always been a mystery and has without doubt been at the onus of numerous interrogations for time immemorial. Despite his access to technological means, Man still cannot decipher all the secrets of the body. The soul remains a more wonderful and more complex creation than the body. Its secrets are very difficult to unravel and even inaccessible to human reason. It was reported that in order to confound the Prophet, some passing Jews asked him about the nature of the soul. The revelation which reached him stated:

- *Sura 17, verse 85*

"And they ask you concerning the Soul; Say: 'The Soul : it is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little'."

The phrase **"And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little."** cited in the previous verse, shows that Man must admit and accept his weakness while recognizing his limitations.

Therefore, we are incapable of apprehending the nature of the soul, nor its relation with the body and nor how it leaves it. In our opinion, though the Qur'anic verse does not forbid scientific research which aims at demystifying the secrets of the soul, any research in this domain will be vain. However, whatever the domain of investigation, human research has always been encouraged by the Qur'an. As an example, in the era of the Revelation when any thought of conquering space or of exploring the terrestrial depths was madness, the Qur'an sent a sincere invitation to humans to take that path, asserting that the alternative could be exploited:

- *Sura 55, verse 33*

"O assembly of Jinns and Humans, if you can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, then pass beyond (them)! Not without a power shall ye be able to pass!"

(It will be understood here that an allusion is made to the power of science)

As we have mentioned it in section 3.1, based on the accounts of the persons who lived an NDE and assured that they were able to go through solid matter, some researchers presented some hypotheses about the nature of the soul. Thus, some of them supposed that it was composed of neutrinos while others hypothesized that it was made of super-luminous matter... However, these hypotheses can never be verified.

Though the nature of the soul is not accessible to us, we may nonetheless deduce a certain number of characteristics:

► *It is observable*

The first study which attracted the attention of the wider public along with the scientific community dates back to 1969, that is the *"On Death and Dying"* published by the American Psychiatrist E. Kübler Ross [14]. She gives an account of the psychological behavior of the agonizing in this book as well as in other papers and works.

Dr Kübler Ross enumerates the different stages characterizing the behavioral variations of an agonizing subject. She observed that in most cases, as they approached the ultimate moment, the agonizing persons opened their eyes and gazed upwards. This observation was already reported in the following 'Hadith' by Prophet Muhammad :

"When the soul is taken away the sight follows it." [17]

Conscience then is observable since several intensive care specialists have confirmed it as they observed some kind of smoke leaving the agonizing body at death (cf. §3.1)

► ***It is material***

The fact that the preceding ‘Hadith’ made it clear that the soul is observable we can deduce that it has material consistence (cf. §3.1) and that ***it is made of matter unknown to us.***

► ***It cannot follow a model***

Verse 85 from Sura 17 indicates the limitations of our science in determining the nature of the soul (its substance): in our opinion, this constitutes a major obstacle to its following a given model.

► ***It possesses the ability to record our own deeds***

According to the Qur'an, the soul which is a vital breath, constitutes both an abode to our "self" as well as a recording warehouse of our deeds. Thus, the soul acts and records our deeds simultaneously as confirmed by verse 98 of Sura 6:

- *Sura 6, verse 98*

"He is Who created you from one single breath which was then split into an abode [for the soul] and a warehouse [for archiving deeds]. These are signs that We detail for those who understand."

Therefore, the human being is a witness of his own deeds and constitutes a living record of his behavior:

- *Sura 17, verses 13-14*

"And on the neck of every man, we attached his work and on the Day of Resurrection, We will bring forth to him a book which he will find wide open: Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day."

► ***It is immortal***

Indeed, the ‘Hadith’ we have just quoted §4.4.1.2 **"You have not been created for annihilation but for eternity, and you transit from an abode to another."** confirms in clear and unambiguous terms that death does not at all mean the end of life, but rather the beginning of another life that will be everlasting. The move of the soul from earthly life to the universe of the afterlife is compared by the ‘Hadith’ to a move from one dwelling to another. The choice of the term “transit” is well chosen because to move away equates to break up with what is known. Indeed, moving is always stressful and calls for a progressive familiarization with the new surroundings to start a new life.

Here, we must make an important remark with regard to immortality of the soul. Following the numerous accounts by many subjects having lived an NDE, some Christian modernist “exegetes” have accepted the thesis of the immortality of the soul. In their opinion, this immortality is but a consequence of the divine breath into Adam’s nostrils. That breath was considered as the injection of “the soul” (viewed as part of God, His breath) into Adam’s body, hence its divine and immortal character.

- *Genesis 2:7*

"Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

The expression **"and breathed into his nostrils"** leaves no doubt on the fact that it is material and quite similar to that of humans since the breath is located in the nostrils.

However, the Qur'an does not specify the location of the breath. Here then we are not dealing with a breath similar to human breath but rather with a breath of a different nature qualified as vital.

- *Sura 38, verse 72*

"So once I made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit (*his soul*), then you fall down prostrate to him."

In a second verse, we find a comparison between the birth of Christ born according to Qur'an without a father and the creation of Adam (originating from a command) which leaves no doubt as to the nature of divine breath: in fact, it is nothing but a command of creation.

- *Sura 3, verse 59*

"Surely for God, Jesus like Adam was created from dust, then He said to him, Be, and he was."

An additional strong argument ascertaining that the soul is not of divine essence is that humans lean more towards evil than towards good as proved by daily events.

The life of human beings would not then be the projection of the Divine Soul into their carnal body, as some would have it, since there is nothing comparable with God's purity and since He is quite different from what anyone can imagine.

- *Sura 42, verse 11*

"... (He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth. ... There is nothing ever like Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing."

The soul then is only a creation among others, but it is immortal.

4.4.3 Disembodiment State and its Consequences

Several facts have been reported in the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's Tradition which describe the disembodiment phenomenon and its consequences. The Qur'an makes it clear that the disembodiment stage -the soul leaving the body- *is accompanied by the modification of perception which grows 'piercing' and is characterized by a sharpening of all the senses which acquire a hyper-developed sensory capacity*. It all happens as if one had unveiled supernatural sensory capabilities.

- *Sura 50, verse 22*

"... (It will be said:) Thou wast in heedlessness of this ... And so We have stripped you of your covering your sight is sharp today."

The Muslim exegetes have unanimously agreed that the changes in perception start with the approach of the ultimate instant, even before the disembodiment process. Indeed, it was noted that the patients approaching death (excepting those cases of sudden death) often talk with close deceased people whom they perceive at their side while the living around them cannot see them. The presence of the deceased persons close to the dying may be explained by the fact that they came back from afterlife in order to accompany them once they had died. In other words, they will serve as their guides.

- *Sura 50, verse 21*

"And every soul cometh, along with it a guide and a witness."

According to Islam, the soul leaving the physical body allows the deceased not only to become more receptive and clairvoyant, *but also to be able to hear and understand*, despite the fact that the ears and brain of their corpses are no longer functional. This was the reason why on the day of the Battle of Badr, when the Muslims wanted to bury the corpses of the pagans who were killed in combat, the Messenger of God addressed the dead in these terms:

“Have you found true what your Lord promised you?” Somebody said to him, “You are addressing dead people.” He replied, “You do not hear better than they but they cannot reply.” [2]

In another ‘Hadith’, the Prophet said: **“The dead man recognises his washer and those that carry him and lower him into his grave.” [5]**

It is also reported in the Islamic tradition that: **“No man dies without being aware of the condition of his family after him. They wash and shroud him while he watches them.” [5]**

It can be deduced from the above that the deceased person keeps some sort of presence in the place of his death, but that his family and those surrounding him are not capable of feeling it. For this reason, Islam forbids the family of the deceased from exaggerating their mourning and their wailings which can only upset the dead who witness the pain of their relatives without being able to inform them of their presence nor console them. This is confirmed by the following ‘Hadith’ :

“The deceased is tortured for the wailing of the living over him.” [1]

In this respect, we may refer to Nicole Dron’s testimony who lived this situation in an NDE when she saw her panicked husband in the waiting room of the hospital: *« I had a feeling of despair because I could not communicate with those whom I loved. In despair I placed my hand (on the abstract body in which I was) on my father in law’s shoulder and my hand went through his body! » [33]*

In his book “Reviving the Sciences of Religion” Imam Al Ghazali reports that one of the Prophet’s companions asked him **“Will I have a mind like that which I have now? And the Prophet replied : ‘Yes’.” [5]**

Thus , according to the preceding verses and Hadithes we can deduce that after death :

- The soul *keeps all of its intellectual and sensory faculties which are modified and become hyper-developed.*
- Our thoughts, our emotions and our impressions *are preserved with everything that constitutes our inner self.*
- There is a *transition from one world to another* and an access to new states of consciousness as stated by the following verse :

- *Sura 3, verse 169*

"Think not of those who are killed in the Way of God as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision."

In other words, *after death one continues to lead a life in the full sense of the term.* This life, be it happy or unhappy depends on past deeds as we shall see in section 4.4.7.

One important observation remains to be made regarding the disembodiment experience : according to the Buddhist creed when the soul leaves the body of the agonizing person le latter continues to see and hear his relatives but cannot speak to them. Therefore, there is agreement only on these two points with what was reported in the Qur'an and the Hadiths. The question that begs itself is where does this information originate from among the Buddhists, especially that they do not assert the existence of a sovereign God ? The answer to this question was provided by some Muslim exegetes such as Hamed Abdelkader who stated that Prophet 'Dhul-Kifl' who was cited in the Qur'an is no other than Buddha [26]. Indeed 'Kifil' is nothing but a translation into Arabic of 'Kapila' the abbreviation of 'Kapilavastu' the native land of the future Buddha 'Siddhārtha Gautama'.

According to those thinkers, the Buddhists deformed the holy scriptures of their prophet and had elevated him to a divine rank very much like the erroneous Christian creed which considers Jesus as God rather than a prophet and an example to be followed.

4.4.4 The Notion of Pre-judgment

Islamic tradition holds that the disembodiment experience marks the beginning of a judgment process, said by the 'Hadith' to be a preliminary while awaiting the Final Judgment which would take place after the actual resurrection.

“With death self-judgment begins.” [5]

This judgment may be considered as the transposition of divine judgment which is final.

Two stages characterize the pre-judgment. While the first consists in a self evaluation of the actions of the deceased on Earth, the second is seen as a consequence to the first. It is an immediate rendering of those actions, good or bad which, according to the subject's merits will produce a joyful or a terrified effect in the course of an NDE. Indeed, as is reported in this 'Hadith':

“The grave is either one of the gardens of heaven or one of the chasms of hell.” [5]

In other words, reward or retribution will begin at the moment of death.

4.4.4.1 Self Evaluation

Qur'an teaches us that once the soul leaves the body, it will be accompanied by a *guide* and a witness during the journey to the netherworld.

- *Sura 50, verse 21*

"And every soul cometh, along with it a guide and a witness."

As for the nature of the 'guide', Islamic tradition informs us that during the agony, the deceased close to the subject will come to accompany him in his spiritual journey to the world beyond once he had expired (cf. §4.4.5) Indeed, the period of agony is a period of stress both psychological and somatic. During that time, the agonizing person keeps worrying about the future of his soul after death, whether there will be a resurrection or a total annihilation etc... The presence of close persons deceased before at his side can only be a calming factor, helping him to get used progressively to the universe of death: this is divine mercy.

Testimonies on this subject are numerous, but we shall limit our study to the account by a young boy who reported what happened prior to the death of his grandfather :

« *He was saying that he could see deceased members of his family who had died decades ago along with his own brothers. He also said that they informed him that the time had come to depart. When I asked him to tell me where those people were, he answered that they were around but that I could not see them.*» [27]

The question that begs itself is to know what means the deceased (also known as guides in death) utilize to know that one of their close relations is in agony in order to come to our terrestrial space and accompany him in his journey to the universe beyond. This point will be treated in §4.4.5.

We stated in §4.4.2 (Nature and characteristics of soul) that our soul is split and that it is endowed with recording and filing our own actions as indicated in the following verse :

- *Sura 6, verse 98*

"He is Who created you from one single breath which was then split into an abode [for the soul] and a warehouse [for archiving deeds]. These are signs that We detail for those who understand."

This leaves no doubt on the fact our soul is a harmonious superposition of two souls giving the illusion of only one. In our opinion, we are dealing with one main soul which embodies a split soul, recording and archiving our own deeds. This is designated by Qur'an (Sura 50, verse: 21) as the 'witness'. God makes it clear that nothing escapes this observing witness and that he records everything:

- *Sura 50, verse 18*

"Not a word does he (or she) utter, but there is a rightful watcher by him ready (to record it)."

In another verse of the same Sura, the split soul is identified as the companion of the main soul and it is characterized by the faithfulness of its records: this is the meaning of the Arabic term ('*atid*').

- *Sura 50, verse 23*

"And his Companion will say: 'Here is (his rightful Record) ready with me!' (عَتِيدٌ 'atid')."

After death, the split soul of the deceased causes an intense interrogation and pushes him to proceed to establish a balance sheet of his past life. Then, he has an instantaneous panoramic view of all the events in his life and judges them truthfully:

- *Sura 17, verses 13-14*

"And on the neck of every man, we attached his work and on the Day of Resurrection, We will bring forth to him a book which he will find wide open: Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day."

The phrase cited in this verse: **"your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day"** mentions that a dialogue is then realized between the split soul ('witness' and recorder of our actions) which includes all the information on the past life of the subject and the main soul: i.e. the auto-evaluation.

In the self evaluation, the deceased is not presented with a list of his own actions but rather, with a video production of his past life as indicated in the following verse :

- Sura 53, verses 39-40

"And that man hath only that for which he attempted, And that truthfully his effort will be seen [*'youra'*]."

The literal translation of the Arabic term '*youra*' is: *will be viewed*.

This self evaluation may be considered as a preliminary judgment of our own deeds. Thus, we do not really deal with a "divine" judgment in the real sense of the term which is reserved for the Last Day of Judgment as it is emphasized by Qur'an:

- Sura 21, verse 47

"And We set a just balance for the Day of Resurrection so that no soul is wronged in aught, might it be of the weight of a grain of mustard, We bring it. And We suffice for reckoners."

The testimonies reported by people who lived an NDE asserted their encounter with a being entirely constituted of Light inspiring peace and that the soul feels that being is aware of everything about the terrestrial existence of the soul. This being of light is no other than the split soul mentioned in the preceding verses which is the filing agent of our actions. In this manner, a person who holds Christ in his heart will believe it is Christ and those who believe in Buddhism will believe it is Buddha and so on...

Some subjects think that in the life panorama enacted by the being of light there is only a parade of events without real judgment. In fact, it is only normal that the being of light (or split soul) render no judgment since by its very nature it is only a mere witness to our actions on Earth. Some authors went even as far as calling for a serious revision of the concepts of Good and Evil in morality and religions since there is not yet any judgment [11].

In our opinion, the auto-evaluation constitutes in itself a judgment of oneself but not in the least a divine judgment as reported by the following testimony :

« Whenever I accomplished a good deed, I was in the heart of the person I did good to and I received this good in exchange. Conversely, whenever I was disagreeable towards the others, I felt within me the suffering I had inflicted on them.» [33]

The self evaluation is in itself a kind of judgment in the universe beyond. On the terrestrial level, it constitutes an essential key allowing to progress on the spiritual level as was asserted by the mystic poet Rumi :

"Pain is born from that search inside one's being, but this pain opens the way beyond the veil." [7]

4.4.4.2 An Expressive Balance Sheet

According to Islamic tradition, depending on whether the auto-evaluation is positive or negative, the good or bad deeds of the deceased will manifest themselves in the form of heavenly or infernal sensations or visions. According to the Holy Qur'an, these visions are but the reflections of the deeds of the deceased, but they have no material reality. Thus, when the Qur'an speaks about the fate of Pharaoh who declared himself Supreme God, it indicates that he will be exposed to hellfire (with his companions) and that this retribution will take place on the Day of Last Judgment. This is shown in the following verse:

- *Sura 40, verse 46*

"The Fire they are exposed to, morning and afternoon, and on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): 'Cause Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!'. "

Contrary to the Buddhist creed according to which the apparitions perceived by the deceased when the soul leaves the body are in fact only a figment of his own mind and that he can delete them at any time, Islam considers that these heavenly or infernal apparitions can in no way be deleted because they embody the actions of the deceased and their consequences when he was living. This was made clear in several Hadiths [13]. We might add that Dr Rawlings underlined it in his book "To Hell and Back" [18] when he reported that a person whom he "resuscitated" after five consecutive heart attacks found herself incapable of escaping the infernal sights that terrified her.

Because of the repercussion of our deeds in the hereafter, Islam considers that the good deeds towards others are thousand times more beneficial in the hereafter than the accomplishment of the usual optional rites (added to the obligatory ones such as prayers etc...) as the following 'Hadith' explains :

"It would be better if any of you accompanied a brother to serve him than to meditate here in my mosque for two months." [6]

It is even recommended to the Muslims that they repel evil by good as much as possible to the point that an enemy becomes an intimate friend simply because good like evil will reverberate :

- *Sura 41, verse 34*

"And not alike are the good and the evil deeds. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend."

Therefore, for a faithful person who performed good deeds in his life, death won't constitute a source of fear or panic. Indeed, as it is ascertained in a 'Hadith', whomever undergoes the death experience will never wish to return from the hereafter. This is quite similar to the situation of a newborn that once it leaves its mother's womb starts crying. But once it perceives the light of day will never wish to go back :

"The believer in this world can be likened to a fetus in its mother's womb, which cries when it emerges. But when it sees the light no longer wishes to return to its former abode." [5]

Indeed, the passage of the fetus from an enclosed, dark and narrow place (its mother's womb) to a broad and enlightened environment with senses that are well developed is comparable to the transition of consciousness at death from our three-dimensional space to the hereafter (which is multidimensional) with modified and hyperdeveloped intellectual and sensory capabilities (cf. § 2.2 and § 4.4.3). For a deceased person, real life actually begins only after death, just as the newborn's life begins only after birth. It is in this sense that we can understand verse 64 of Sura 29, which says that real life is the life in the hereafter

- *Sura 29, vers 64*

"And this life of the world is only amusement and play! Verily, the home of the Hereafter, is indeed the true life if they but knew"

People who have lived a positive NDE observed this reality (cf. § 3.5 interview of Dr. Moody) which was already accepted by the Muslims at the time of the Revelation. This is why Abu-d-Dardaa (one of the Prophet's companions) who, when asked about the best gift to offer a friend

answered unhesitatingly: death. When he was asked to justify his response, he retorted: “The soul is imprisoned in the body during its sojourn on Earth and is freed only after death” [5]. At death, all the earthly needs such as hunger, thirst, sleep, etc... vanish.

This helps us then to understand Rumi’s citation: “*dying is celebrating one’s nuptials with eternity.*” [7]

Undoubtedly, everyone will one day confront death, and when that day arrives, it will be a magnificent and marvelous experience for those who did good but infernal for those who did the opposite.

4.4.5 The Universe of the Hereafter (or life past the barrier of death)

According to the Muslim faith, every person will after death begin a new existence which immediately follows (or substitutes itself to earthly life) in what is called “Al-barzakh Life” meaning a life beyond the barrier. The latter separates in fact the universe of the hereafter (of death) from the other universes:

We must note that the term ‘*barzakh*’ (barrier) is used three times in the Qur’an: in Suras 25 and 55 to signal the existence of a barrier between fresh water and salt water (when a river flows into the sea) coexisting side by side without mixing. This phenomenon has been discovered recently and is due to the difference in density of waters with different rates of salinity which in turn explains the existence of fresh water rivers in the oceans. The barrier cited in the two Suras is said to be impossible to cross:

- *Sura 25, verse 53*

“(God) is the One Who has let free the two seas, one is agreeable and sweet, the other salty and bitter. He placed a barrier between them, a partition that it is forbidden to pass.”

- *Sura 55, verses 19-20*

“He has loosed the two seas. They meet together. Between them there is a barrier which they do not transgress.”

The last citation of the term ‘*barzakh*’ occurs in Sura 23 to designate the separation between the universe of the hereafter (or death) and the other universes. It must be noted that here, the term *is not followed as it was in the previous two verses by an expression stating the notion of the impossibility of crossing*:

- *Sura 23, verses 99-100*

“... Until, when death comes to one of them, he says: ‘My Lord! Send me back, So that I may do good in that which I have left behind!’ No! It is but a word that he speaks, and behind them is a barrier [*barzakh*] until the Day when they will be resurrected.”

This allows one to postulate that this barrier (or separation) is permeable in both directions. Indeed, patients having lived an NDE reported that they had faced a barrier which they tried to cross in vain, but they also stated that they met with deceased relatives. It is also certain that this encounter did not take place in the universe of death since the subjects in question could not cross it and otherwise, they could not have come back to live. This is the reason why we postulated the existence of a *transient (intermediary) universe between the earthly universe and that of the hereafter*. It is thanks to this universe that the deceased were able to transit from their universe to our own.

At present, we must present the nature and characteristics of that universe based on the statements of the Islamic tradition.

- In view of the fact that each of us is rewarded/punished neither totally nor partially for his actions be they virtuous or evil in this world, it is only logical that he be rewarded or punished in the Other World with his new life after death. Therefore, the quality of life in this universe for each person will closely depend on his actions on this earth.

- According to Islamic tradition, the encounter with deceased relatives in the space beyond occurs immediately after death. Indeed, a ‘Hadith’ in the Prophet’s biography was reported by his wife Aïcha saying :

“The Prophet called his daughter Fatima during his illness in which he died, and told her a secret whereupon she wept. Then he called her again and told her a secret whereupon she laughed. When I asked her about that, she replied: “The Prophet spoke to me in secret and informed me that he will die in the course of the illness during which he died, so I wept. He again spoke to me in secret and informed me that I would be the first of his family to follow him (after his death) and on that I smiled.” [4]

Six months after the Messenger of God left this world, Fatima died. The commentators on the ‘Hadith’ explained the joy of Fatima by the fact that the reunion with her father would immediately follow her death.

- According to Islamic tradition, in the hereafter, the deceased will live in a body similar to the body they were born with. This is how the deceased recognize one another as their appearance remains unchanged. This has been confirmed by the patients who lived an NDE when they were able to recognize their dead relatives and close friends.

In that universe, the deceased will enjoy life in its full meaning:

- *Sura 3, verses 169-170*

"Think not of those who are killed in the Way of God as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision. They rejoice in what God has bestowed upon them of His Bounty, rejoicing for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind (not yet martyred) that on them no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve.."

While this verse asserts that the martyrs are alive and well in the hereafter, most exegetes think that all the deceased shall lead some kind of life which could be happy or unhappy [5].

- In the hereafter, the soul has the power to perceive events marking the life of a living relative. Indeed, it is reported in a ‘Hadith’ that our deeds are displayed to our deceased relatives:

“So by God I adjure you regarding your brethren in the graves, for your works are shown to them.” [5]

Another ‘Hadith’ makes it clear that our actions are exhibited in their entirety and that the bad deeds are no exception.

“Do not shame your dead with your evil works, for they are shown to them in the graves.” [5]

This may be confirmed by the testimonies of agonizing patients who asserted that the deceased relatives came to accompany them even before the soul left the body [27] (cf. testimony in §4.4.4.1). Obviously, this proves that this can happen only if our deceased relatives follow up all the events of our earthly life.

In other words, the soul can apprehend all the events and perceive their true relations which do not respect the cause-effect principle. In the hereafter, the cause-effect principle having vanished, events become instantaneous. Thus, the concepts of past, present and future have no more sense and the notion of elapsing time does no longer exist.

In the following verse, we find confirmation that in the netherworld, generally speaking, all events affecting humans were defined even before their creation, and the principle according to which the cause always precedes the effect is no longer valid:

- *Sura 57, verses 22-23*

"No calamity befalls the earth or yourselves that is not inscribed in the Book of Decrees, before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for God. In order that you may not be sad over matters that you fail to get, nor rejoice because of that which has been given to you. And God likes not prideful boasters."

The hereafter would then be governed by the principle of information/meaning where causality has no value on this scale.

In our opinion, since the causality principle is no longer valid, our deceased relatives are allowed to be instantaneously aware of all the events affecting our earthly life as well as of our deeds. However, the information they may receive are only limited to our three-dimensional space and in no way constitute absolute knowledge. Indeed, according to Qur'an, God alone detains the keys to the unknown:

- *Sura 6, verse 59*

"And with Him are the keys of the *Ghaib* (all that is hidden), none knows them but He... "

The information acquired by the deceased on the totality of the events of a human lifetime probably represents only a mere exchange of information -between two universes of a different nature- which is governed by laws still unknown to us.

- However, one last question remains to be asked regarding the dimension of that universe: basing ourselves on the studies of NDEs, we have postulated that the soul is integrated progressively via the 'tunnel' of our earthly universe into the new one described by witnesses as unusual (multidimensional) and in case of irreversible death, there occurs a crossing of luminous barrier. To our mind, the barrier cited in Sura 23, verses: 99-100 is nothing but ***an interconnection*** between the transient universe and the universe of afterlife, very much similar to the tunnel which we explained as ***a hidden dimension***, linking our universe to the transient one. This allows us to maintain that ***the universe beyond has a dimension higher than that of the transient universe*** as perceived by NDE witnesses..

4.4.6 The Transient universe

4.4.6.1 Nature of the Transient universe

We established that the transient universe perceived by NDE witnesses possessed particular time-space characteristics different from those of our universe. Indeed, certain patients asserted that they were able to ‘see’ future events concerning their life on Earth.

One young woman whose account was taken by K. Ring [19] had a vision of her future within the panorama : « *It was as if I saw my husband at the same time I saw us together five years later in the company of our children. It was as if I knew the children I was going to have.* » The young woman saw clearly that she would have two boys which happened later in life.

It is known that causality presents itself as a principle organizing information according to a temporal mode linked to the elapsing of time, a “before” and an “after”. To see a future event happening simply means that in the new space causality no longer plays the prominent role it plays in the usual time-space.

However, the great majority of NDE witnesses asserted that they saw no future event concerning them during the panoramic review. Therefore, causality is still present in that universe. This lets us suppose that a non causal principle coexists with causality which tends to achieve unity in that universe. We cannot but compare these observations with the conclusions of Quantum Mechanics where a particle possesses a large number of states where it is simultaneously present. It is the researcher, through experimental observation and measurement, who makes the particle move in one state which will be actually observed.

The presence of two antagonistic principles in that space is not strange since we are within a different time-space framework where time and space no longer have the same characteristics known to us.

In our opinion, the degree of spiritual evolution of the soul is the factor which endows this space with a causal or non causal principle in a way much similar to the state of a particle in Quantum Mechanics (cf. §3.2) as will be illustrated in the note of §4.4.6.3.

Note : The coexistence of both the causal and non causal principles was confirmed by the testimonies quoted by K. Ring [19]. Indeed, a majority of witnesses who lived an NDE stated that they had the impression that their life paraded speedily in the course of their panoramic vision : « *The display took place before me like a prodigiously accelerated movie, allowing me nonetheless to view and to understand everything.* » There is then an awareness of the elapsing of time, meaning that the transient space is a causal one. However, some witnesses reported that they had the impression that their experience had lasted an eternity as if time had stopped [19] which in other words means that the causality principle was abolished. One witness declared : « *I had no longer any notion of time and time meant nothing* », while another added : « *I have no idea how long it lasted. When I think about it at times, I have the impression that it was an eternity.* »

4.4.6.2 Sleep and Death

According to the Islamic creed, sleep is the twin brother of death as shown in this ‘Hadith’:

“Sleep is the twin brother of death, like you sleep like you will die and as you wake up you resuscitate.” [12]

In sleep, the soul leaves the body in a manner comparable to the disembodiment experience. This separation is explicitly referred to in the following verse which asserts that the soul leaves the body during sleep and that it reenters it in awakening:

- *Sura 39, verse 42*

"God takes away the souls at the time of their death as well as those that die not during their sleep. He keeps those (*souls*) for which He has ordained death and sends back the rest for a term appointed. Verily, in this are signs for a people who think deeply."

The question to be asked here is if the soul leaves the body during sleep, how can the body continue to function? verse 98 of Sura 6 (cf. §4.4.2) informs us that each living being embodies a soul which is in fact split into a harmonious superposition of two souls, giving the illusion of one single soul. On the one hand we find the main soul and on the other the partial soul in charge of filing our actions, referred to as the '*witness*' in Sura 50, verse 21 (cf. §4.4.3). This soul/witness by its very nature records everything surrounding the subject and never leaves the body. When the main soul leaves the body during sleep, the partial conscience takes over and manages the body.

4.4.6.3 Dreams

When we go to sleep, we fall unconscious. In that state, we notice a loosening of the link uniting the main conscience and the cerebral cortex, a link responsible for what is known as "*wakefulness*" or "*full conscience*".

Numerous studies have shown that there exist two types of sleep in humans, quiet sleep and active sleep or paradoxical sleep. The former is the '*normal*' sleep deprived of dreams and the latter appear only in the course of the second type. Whereas in the quiet sleep all the electroencephalographs show complete calmness, those of paradoxical sleep (that of dreams) which represents only one-fifth of a night, show a real explosion: sleep is lighter, the cardiac rhythm and breathing become irregular, the blood pressure rate increases, the rates of adrenaline and cortisone increase abruptly and brain temperature becomes worrisome. Humans undergo this paradoxical state five or six times a night. If a subject were to be prevented from the paradoxical stage but allowing him quiet sleep, he would soon fall ill to a serious neurosis or psychosis which could lead to death. Conversely, if the subject is spared only his paradoxical sleep, he will remain in good health.

This is certain proof that the dreams we have each night are necessary for our survival since they help to maintain a good mental balance.

According to Islam, *the soul ascends to heaven and does not remain in our terrestrial space*. But no other precision is given as to its final destination.

Islamic tradition also mentions the possible encounter between a living person's soul and a dead one's during sleep. But in which universe does this encounter take place? Certainly not in the hereafter since we have seen that the living are unable to cross the barrier (of death) as cited in Sura 23, verses 99-100. In our opinion, *when we dream, we penetrate the transient universe which is the dwelling of the souls during sleep which may be considered as the anteroom of death*.

We saw previously (cf. §4.4.3) according to Islamic tradition that the soul is aware of all the stages of the funeral (funeral bath, burial of one's body etc...)

"The dead man recognises his washer and those that carry him and lower him into his grave." [5]

Two hypotheses may be put forth regarding this:

- To be aware of all the stages of the funeral may mean that there is a direct attendance of the funeral. In other words, this supposes that the soul could remain in our earthly universe until the burial.
- The attendance is indirect i.e. immediately after the ascent of the tunnel and the passage to the universe of the hereafter. The soul is capable of witnessing the different stages of the burial starting from its universe which we might remind is multidimensional as was reported by Moody in his "Life after Life" [16]. This is in keeping with Islamic tradition. Indeed, we quoted a 'Hadith' in §4.4.5 which stated that our actions are displayed before our deceased relatives.

According to the studies on NDEs, several witnesses described the stages of their own resuscitation and the panic of their relatives after their disembodiment and before the ascension of the tunnel. This is enough proof that the soul will remain for a while in our earthly universe and that the two hypotheses we put forth are valid.

Since ascending the tunnel does not occur immediately after death, it is then inconceivable to think that it is immediate at the moment of sleep.

Flowing from these observations, it becomes logical to distinguish dreams into two categories: those which happen before the ascension of the soul (early sleep) and those that occur after the ascension proper.

In the first case we are dealing with a dream when the soul is still in our earthly space. During the dream, what is experienced or observed by the main soul is transmitted to the partial soul (for filing) and generally speaking there is no loss of information. Indeed, the information is acquired within the three-dimensional universe and is displayed in the same space and hence it will not be deformed. As an example, we shall quote the following narrative reported by the famous German poet Goethe where his friend Frédéric's dream was realized in its minute details:

« One evening, while taking a walk in the company one of his friends near Weimar, he was surprised to see another Friend named Frédéric right in front of him. He was wearing a dressing gown and slippers which was quite strange since they were in the countryside. Wishing to embrace his friend, Goethe moved forward, but found nothing. The vision worried him and he wondered whether he was going mad. The great poet decided to go back home where he was surprised to find his friend Frédéric asleep near the chimney, wearing the robe and the slippers. Frédéric had arrived unannounced in Weimar and not finding Goethe at his home, he had made himself comfortable and gone to sleep. Another striking detail was that during his sleep, he had dreamed that he had gone to meet Goethe on the highway, wearing a robe and slippers.»

In the second case, we are dealing with a dream where the soul had already ascended the transient space. During the dream, what is lived or observed by the main soul is transmitted to the partial soul, but in this case, there is generally a loss of information. Indeed, the information is acquired in a multidimensional space and is displayed in our three-dimensional space. Because of the difference between the dimensions of the two spaces (cf. §3.4.2.1) it will generally be deformed. For instance, a person may see in a dream that he is covered in blood (which terrifies him when he awakens) and during the day, he accidentally pricks his finger with a needle which causes some blood to ooze.

Incidentally, we must note that predictive dreams can be explained within this context. When the soul enters the transient universe, it may detect information on events to come concerning the individual sheltering it. Thus, the future can appear during a dream accidentally.

We must also note that in some dreams, there may be a combination of information acquired by the soul of the transient universe with those observed in our three-dimensional space which constitutes a third category of dreams.

We way cite in this context a tale which one of my colleagues, Mr Ayed Addad told me. In a dream, he saw that he was walking about in a hotel which he explored thoroughly. He also saw a commercial street in the vicinity of the hotel with an appliance store at its end. Much later, this colleague had the opportunity to participate in a seminar which was organized in the United States, in San Diego. He made his hotel reservation via the Internet in one of San Diego's hotels. But when he arrived at his hotel, he was disappointed to learn that his reservation had not been registered. He had to look rapidly for another hotel. In the only hotel where he could find an available room, he was amazed that it was the exact replica of the hotel he had dreamed about. Before his departure, he decided to take a walk in the adjoining street to check if there was an appliance store. There too he found the store which looked exactly like the store in his dream.

It is clear then that in this predictive dream, Mr Addad had seen in the transient space the hotel which accommodated him and not the hotel he had reserved, and this way, the hotel where he stayed was alone the hotel which his soul had explored before reintegrating his body.

Notes :

1/ We saw in §4.4.6.1 that it is the degree of spiritual evolution of the soul which endows the transient space with a causal or non causal principle. This can be consolidated by the fact that prophets and pious people boast frequent predictive dreams.

2/ In the transient space, it is possible for the soul of a deceased person not only to encounter the soul of a living person but it can also provide him with some information that is not accessible to us.

Such phenomena have really taken place. Regarding this, we may cite as an example the case of Thabet Ibn Qaïs, one of the Prophet's companions, who lived in the era of the first Caliph and who was killed in a battle in Yemen. One soldier had stolen his armor, but in the course of a friend's dream, he had denounced to him the act, providing the name of the culprit and the place where it could be retrieved [12].

3/ In everyday life, a person might feel attracted by another and a quick relationship is established between the two strangers. Islamic tradition explains this by the existence of an attraction between the souls of the two persons which is actualized by perfect harmony between their tempers. Indeed, we find in a 'Hadith' that the souls regroup in a way similar to that of regiments in an army *'which gather according to their specialty'*

“Souls are like recruited troops: Those who are like qualities are inclined to each other, but those who have dissimilar qualities, differ.” [3]

According to verse 42 in Sura 39 cited in the previous section (§4.4.6.2), the soul leaves the body only during sleep or in death. Therefore, any encounter between the souls can only take place during sleep.

Basing our opinion on our previous two remarks, we may conclude that the transient space is where the souls of the living meet with one another as well as with the souls of the living and the dead. This is quite possible since even though the dead have their own space, we saw that the space was

bound by a barrier which according to the Qur'an is permeable. Let us note that the phenomenon reported in the second remark is infrequent, which supposes that the encounter between the souls of the living and those of the dead is accidental.

We shall end this section by answering a question that has tormented the mind of many people: while asleep, we accumulate in our conscience a superposition of multiple information emanating from the transient universe. If all this information is of a premonitory type, why could the cortex not detect the totality of the acquired information? If that were the case, our universe as we live it could not exist. Indeed, a condition that is required for its existence is the presence of filters which allow only an infinitesimal part of that information to pass, according to causal sequences in a way that entails the sensation of time elapsing. This is the reason why the recollection of our dreams is more or less deformed.

4.4.7 Resurrection

The existence or inexistence of a judgment of one's actions after death has been a determining factor which has conditioned human behavior for time immemorial. Indeed, there is a great difference between those who do not believe in resurrection, thinking only about their own self-interest and those who believe that a day will come when they will be judged for their actions and sayings and rewarded or punished accordingly.

The former will only abide by a way of life dictated by their passion, sexual desire and egotism, always finding justification for their deeds.

The latter remain within the sphere of Right and are always apt to incriminate themselves and take the blame.

- *Sura 75, verses 1-2*

"Nay! I swear by the day of resurrection. Nay! I swear by the self-accusing soul!"

The Qur'an has placed a paramount importance on the Last Day. Unfortunately, people forget this and have no worry about it because of their attachment to the here and now and since they are prisoners of their profit, their ephemeral pleasures, using all means. The fact of believing in the Last Day of Judgment moderates our inclination and avidity for material life... This is what the following verse alludes to:

- *Sura 83, verses 1-6*

"Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure, But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account? On a Mighty Day, A Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?"

For some, resurrection is only a myth and a phantasm, belonging to the lies of religions and destined to seduce and cheat. Therefore, to prove that the resurrection will take place is an impossible task. For this reason, the Qur'an asserts that the coming of that Day is a divine promise as it is made clear in the following verse:

- *Sura 16, verse 38*

"They swear their strongest oaths by God, that God will not raise up those who die: Nay, but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth: but most among mankind realize it not."

4.4.7.1 Resurrection and the Fossil Cadavers

Resurrection has always raised interrogations and the unbelievers of Mecca had questioned the Prophet about God's power to resuscitate them in order to defy him : "When we die and will become but bones and dust, shall we be resuscitated? " The answer was given in a verse of Sura 17 which asserted that even if corpses were fossilized, God will be able to resuscitate them. The verse in question mentions two possible states of fossilizing: either into pyrite (iron) or into stone:

- *Sura 17, verses 49-51*

"And they say: 'What! when we shall have become bones and decayed particles, shall we then be raised up for sure, unto a new creation?' Say: 'Be you of stone or iron, or any other creature you might conceive of!' But they will say: 'Who will return us?' Say: 'He Who created you at first.' Still they will shake their heads at you and say: 'When will it be?' Say: 'Maybe very soon'."

The phrase **"or any other creature you might conceive of"** was used to show the unbelievers that divine powers know no bounds.

It is important to emphasize that Sura 17 makes it clear that fossilizing occurs only by two processes which were confirmed by Paleontology. It is well known in this science that this process is one of "opalization" which is a rather rare physic-chemical phenomenon occurring under special conditions of temperature and pressure with the advantage of revealing the very fine structure of organisms. We indeed deal here with a replacement molecule by molecule achieved over lengthy periods of time. Depending on the sedimentary environment, there will only be two fossilizing outcomes: a silicification (transformation into silicon) or pyritization (transformation into iron pyrite) [31].

4.4.7.2 Reward and Punishment

According to Islamic tradition, the reward or the punishment of each human being, is proportional to the magnitude of their sins or their good deeds on Earth, after an individual interrogation of each person. Whereas the NDE patients indicated that the review of their life had been swift and without judgment, in resurrection there is also a panoramic review but it is accompanied by a questioning on each act that was committed. We deal here then with a divine judgment in the real sense of the term in which no action however tiny, is spared. In the course of the divine judgment, the subject is not allowed to speak because it is up to the body parts (hands, feet etc...) to proceed to a reconstitution of the actions. In actual fact, what really happens is a **true reconstitution of the deeds committed by the subject in earthly life**, as is specified by the following two verses :

- *Sura 99 verses 7-8*

"So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it."

- *Sura 36, verse 65*

"That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But their hands will speak to us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did."

We equally find the same meaning as the one in the preceding verses when the tongue also bears witness if the act is verbal :

- Sura 24, verse 24

"On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet shall bear witness against them as to what they did."

The consequence of the evaluation is translated by an admission to Heaven or to Hell, according to merit.

As we indicated in §3.4.2.2, reward or punishment, which may affect the individual's soul after death, cause a sensation of peace or of horror. We particularly cited the case of Pharaoh and his companions who will be exposed to fire while the supreme punishment will materialize only on the Last Day of Judgment:

- Sura 40, verse 46

"The Fire they are exposed to, morning and afternoon, and on the Day when the Hour will be established (it will be said to the angels): 'Cause Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) people to enter the severest torment!'"

The unbelievers of Mecca who did not accept the principle of reward or punishment claimed, in keeping with their three-dimensional logic that it was impossible for someone who was thrown in Hell to feel anything since he will be burned entirely. In answer to this claim, the Qur'an stated that on the contrary, it is quite possible since the skin which is the seat of all sensations will be regenerated perpetually.

- Sura 4, verse 56

"Those who disbelieved our Verses, We shall soon cast them into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall exchange their skins for fresh ones, that they may taste the punishment: for Allah Exalted is Powerful, Wise! "

Further, the Qur'an holds that life in the hereafter is not only dependent on the belief in God but also on ill-placed or stray activities. Indeed, several people claim to be pious and to do good, but as soon as there is a conflict between their belief and their personal interests, they choose to act egotistically.

- Sura 18, verses 103-104

"Say: 'Shall we tell you of those who fail most in respect of their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, whilst they believe that they are acting well?'"

Nonetheless, beyond all that has been said, the Qur'an explains that the true reward can be enacted only through the vision of the Lord.

- Sura 75, verses 22-25

"That day will faces be resplendent, Looking toward their Lord; And that day will other faces be despondent, Thou wilt know that some great disaster is about to fall on them."

We must add that if the Lord's vision is possible in the universe beyond, it is not possible in our three-dimensional space since it is different from our own as it is made clear in the following verse:

- Sura 7, verse 143

"And when Moses came at the time and place appointed by Us, and his Lord spoke to him, he said: 'O my Lord! Show me (Yourself), that I may look upon You.' God said: 'You cannot (bear to) see Me, but look upon the mountain if it stands still in its place then you shall see Me.' So when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He made it

collapse to dust, and Moses fell down unconscious. Then when he recovered his senses he said: 'Glory be to You, I turn to You in repentance and I am the first of the believers'."

The other important question which has been of great concern is whether resurrection occurs in a spiritual or physical body. In fact, this is a red herring because according to the Hadiths we quoted, the biological death of a human being does not affect his identity and the carnal body is only a garment covering the soul which has been confirmed by the NDEs. Asking the question as to whether we have a material body or a spiritual one at Resurrection is equivalent to asking if on the Day of Resurrection we will be clothed or naked.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has precisely been to propose some thoughts on several opinions concerning the oft-repeated question to wit life after death. We reached the conclusion that death does not constitute an end since it is immediately followed by a new existence. Under these conditions, death would only be a move in existence which in no way affects the soul as it was made clear in the Qur'an, the Hadiths and Islamic Tradition. This was also confirmed by the testimony of persons who lived an NDE. Indeed, their experience showed that our identity is not affected by death and that in fact our brain would act as a filter for the soul which once it has been freed, would become more performing and capable to travel in time and space. The human brain held to be up to now the essential organ, is but a mere interface between the body and the soul. Therefore, the cerebral cortex plays the role of a screen to our perception of the total universe and this is the reason why we have at our disposal only an infinitesimal part of the information concerning the world around us.

In the course of the past twenty five years, we have learned a great deal more about the Earth and the Cosmos than what was discovered previously. The more scientific progress advances, the more we discover that the world is more and more mysterious. As scientific knowledge progresses we enter more and more in contact with the unknown, without any hope of knowing everything. This is the reason why even the most renown scientists have accepted little by little the fact that the universe is not limited to what we can observe: one part of reality escapes our senses and our knowledge. Indeed, it was demonstrated in Quantum Mechanics that matter (basic criterion of the real) is constituted of particles which are not entirely deprived of conscience (cf. §3.2 Towards a Model for Conscience). Isn't this idea that conscience reigns in every object the very one stated in verse 44 of Sura 17?

- Sura 17, verse 44

"... heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, celebrate His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbear, Most Forgiving!"

This verse should help to modify our conception of matter and lead us to envision reality which yet remains impossible to perceive through another angle.

An idea imposed itself on us to compare what was revealed in the Holy Scriptures regarding the hereafter with the observations made on the experiences on the edge of death, which have been carried out systematically for a few years by an American School of Medicine. The comparison has proved worthwhile and it showed that in the case of the Muslim Religion, it was possible to provide a coherent interpretation of the different stages of an NDE.

What is striking in the Islamic thesis is the mention of the barrier in verses 99-100 of Sura 23 which was reported in no other religion. In Qur'an, this barrier is real and that is what was confirmed by the NDEs.

What is equally striking is the citation in the Qur'an (*verse 42, Sura 39*) according to which the soul leaves the body at the moment of sleep and reintegrates it at awakening (cf. the account reported by the German poet Goethe: §4.4.6.3). No other religious text ever alluded to this phenomenon.

In our opinion, the NDEs should contribute to screen religious concepts from the myths and distortions attached to them and one should always use some judiciousness :

- *Sura 2, verse 79*

"Therefore woe be unto those who write the Scripture with their hands and then say : 'This is from God', that they may purchase a small gain therewith. Woe unto them for that their hands have written, and woe unto them for that they earn thereby! "

Undoubtedly, the study of the NDEs has contributed a great deal to the exploration and discovery of the netherworld. Be they positive or negative, we may not remain indifferent to those experiences of near death since they transform the behavior of those who lived them, oftentimes bringing about a radical change of their lives. They lead us to become aware of the ephemeral nature of life, of the need for each of us to try all along our life to carry out our mission by meeting the divine precepts and to be aware that the material goods and pleasures of this life are but temporary.

Finally, let us note that the NDEs show us only a few aspects of the hereafter and of what will happen after death. Indeed, to be aware of everything, one must see death and come back alive. However, all the testimonies show clearly that these persons only reached the verge of death and have really never crossed the barrier. Then, we have no knowledge of what really happens behind the curtain which we shall cross only once...

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***"Do they not then consider the Qur'an carefully? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein many a contradiction! "* (Qur'an 4:82)**

***"We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this (the Quran) is the truth. Is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord that He is a Witness over all things?"* (Qur'an 41 :53)**

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For the quotations from the Qur'an, we particularly relied on the translation of Y. Ali as well as that of M. Pickthall [34]. The word *Allâh* (divine name in Arabic الله) used in some translations, means *the unique God* of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and all the prophets.

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