

TO AWAKENING, PART 3

The Study of The Existence of the Soul: NDE & OBE

A primary premise of studying reincarnation is to recognize that people do have a soul. If souls do not exist, then what is being reincarnated? So our first topic is to prove the existence of the soul.

Before we start this topic, let me first tell you a story. One of the Buddhist practitioners in Amida Society said that the reason she started to learn Buddhism is because of an incident she encountered.

One day, she was about to head to the hospital after her husband fell from a bench because she was afraid of a bone fracture of her aged husband. The phone rang at that moment; a friend who practiced Buddhism very well told her that her husband is okay because his mother caught him at the time he fell, so he did not get hurt. She had goosebumps all over her body and said, "My mother-in-law died three decades ago. How could that be?" The friend said, "Due to a deep attachment, your mother-in-law, after death, has never left her son." This practitioner even told her which chair in the living room her deceased mother-in-law loves to sit most.

How chilling is it that a deceased mother-in-law is sitting in your living room? What happened after one's death? Does that mean there might be many of them around us? How did this practitioner, in a different location, know what happened in her house? Is it possible that anyone can practice to have the ability to know incidents in different times, places, and dimensions?... Many questions arose in her, she started to explore from many different sources and finally found all the answers in Buddhism.

In recent decades, Western science has looked for scientific evidence to prove the existence of the soul by studying what is called NDE and OBE.

According to Gallup, near-death experiences, NDE, are common in the United States. At least 13 million adults alive today reported having had a near-death experience. The NDE phenomenon has attracted scientists from various fields. Some famous medical journals have published many compelling cases and prompted the International Association for Near-Death Studies to be formally established In 1978. This indicates that the research is just unfolding.

Typical Near-Death Experiences

American parapsychologist Dr. Karlis Osis (1917 - 1997), co-authored a book titled *At the Hour of Death*, in which he summarized common characteristics of near-death experiences, including confusion and memory loss. But a small number of people were able to maintain a lucid mind until the last minute; these clear-minded people claimed that they saw their afterlife. In the 1970's, Dr. Raymond Moody from the University of Nevada conducted a similar study of 150 near-death cases. His book, *Life After Life*, became a bestseller.

In both Osis and Moody's research, many subjects saw visions, such as the spirits of their deceased relatives and friends, religious and mythical characters, or a spiritual light and a beautiful otherworldly environment. For example, Christians would see Jesus; Buddhists who recite Amitabha would see Amitabha. Amitabha is the Buddha of the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. In this land, the inhabitants experience no suffering but enjoy all happiness.

Sometimes the god let them evaluate their own lives and then rapidly showed them major incidents of their lives, as if they were watching a movie. After they finished watching, these people would still feel an affinity with our world, so they would wake up again. Some said, "I did not want to return to the Earth." Why? Because human life has too much suffering. "Yet an invisible force pulled me back, so I had no choice but to return."

A Terrifying Near-Death Experience

According to the NDE research subjects, when the soul has left the body, various "gods" would show them all of the good and bad things they have done in their lives. Chinese ancestors often said, "What is done by night appears by day." Daoists give us an even more insightful warning:

*Three feet above our heads there are gods;
the good and evil karmas we have committed
are all under the watch and on the records of gods.*

Without scientific evidence, ancients believed in gods and causality, so they had "fear" in their hearts and did not dare to do bad deeds. People nowadays no longer believe in cause and effect or gods, so they have "no fear" and dare to challenge and "fight," causing the disasters on Earth to be unprecedented.

In *Impressions of Heaven*, a book of stories taken from the oral statements of 100 survivors, a German warden named Stein Heidler reported a terrible near-death experience. In his life, Heidler had been cruel and indifferent to people. And he treated prisoners very harshly. When Heidler was near death, he found himself surrounded by fearsome ghosts baring their fangs and brandishing their claws.

Buddhist scriptures also have included near-death experiences. *The Sutra of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha's Fundamental Vows* contains this paragraph,

*At the end of their lives,
the sentient beings of Jambudvīpa (the planet Earth),
even those who have done "good deeds,"
will have hundreds of thousands of evil spirits
in the forms of their parents or relatives to tempt them to the evil paths.*

The description in the Sutra told us that the families or friends we see might be the creditors of ours. They came to tempt us to their realm, so they could take revenge. How horrifying is that? Even people doing good deeds will encounter this, can you imagine what would happen to those who have done "evil deeds"?

Astral Projection—OBE

A British doctor, Sam Parnia (born 1972), designed an experiment specifically for patients at their time of death. He hung a board from the ceiling above the operating table and put some objects on it. Many of these patients were able to accurately describe what they saw on the board.

The phenomenon of the soul leaving the body is common in people who are about to die, but people who are alive may also have out of body experiences—OBE. This ability is also known as "astral projection."

At the University of California, Professor Charles Tart (born 1937) conducted scientific experiments on healthy people who claimed their souls had left their bodies. He printed out a randomly generated five-digit number, put it on a high shelf, and then asked his subjects if they were able to see the number while "out of body." One young woman who volunteered for this experiment could tell the number on the paper.

According to mathematical probability, the odds of correctly guessing a randomly generated five-digit number is one in 100,000. The experiment proved that she did not guess—she really saw it. The soul can see and even memorize information. To do these tasks, the soul must have some kind of energy of its own when it is separated from the body. With this energy, the soul can do significant work.

Quantum Physics Explains the Existence of the Soul

A group of physicists using modern physics, especially quantum mechanics, argue that the existence of the soul is indeed objective in theory. One of these physicists is a well-known Indian-American professor and researcher at the Institute of Noetic Sciences, Dr. Amit Goswami. He used quantum mechanics to argue that humans have a soul. His conclusion is described in a book titled *Physics for the Soul*.

Some scientists believe that the recent discovery of quantum vibrations in microtubules inside brain neurons giving rise to consciousness can account for the afterlife. According to the Huffington Post, Hameroff and Penrose stated that It is possible that quantum information can exist outside the body as a soul.

Nuclear physicist and molecular biologist Jeremy Hayward of Cambridge University makes no secret of his convictions. He claimed that, in addition to space, time, matter, and energy, consciousness could be a fundamental element of the world—perhaps even more fundamental than space and time.

From these scientists' new publications, not only can we see scientists' efforts to prove the existence of the soul through the scientific method but their attempt to explain it in theory.

Most cultures, in ancient and modern times, in the east and the west, all have some concept of the soul. A great number of people even have reported actually seeing a soul; whether it is called a “ghost” or “spirit.” Perhaps, even some of you have seen them as well.

In the next part, we will introduce to you two classic cases of astral projection. More appealingly, how Einstein and Eastern philosophy explain time and space are illusions.