

BOOK REVIEW

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Why an Afterlife Obviously Exists: A Thought Experiment and Realer Than Real Near-Death Experiences by Jens Amberts, IFF Books, 2022, 169 pp., \$16.95 pb (ISBN 978-1785359859); Kindle ed. \$7.99 e-book.

Like author Jens Amberts, I am not a near-death experiencer but have been interested in them for many years, read many books on the subject, and attended conferences of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS). Amberts, who, according to the back cover of the book, “is trained in philosophy at Linköping University,” approached the subject of near-death experiences (NDEs) as proof for the existence of an afterlife from a philosophical perspective. According to his book, his primary research interests are NDEs and the intersection of philosophy and spirituality.

The target audience for this book is open-minded empiricists and others who are undecided about the reality of an afterlife. Those who had NDEs will very likely not need additional proof: They know what they experienced. Those who had exposure to many experiencers and their stories, as well as research literature, might not need convincing, either. That leaves those who are generally open-minded but genuinely skeptical and those who would like to equip themselves with arguments for debates with doubters. For that audience, the book delivers philosophical arguments for the existence of an afterlife.

Amberts presented his conclusion already with the title of the book, *Why an Afterlife Obviously Exists*. Although it is an accurate summary of the book’s argument, the title has the potential to repulse those who would most benefit from reading it: reasonably open-minded skeptics.

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The book delivers on its promise to present sound philosophical arguments for the obviousness of the existence of an afterlife. I found the perspective it offered to be fresh and to contribute meaningfully to the debate about what proof means in the context of NDEs.

In the introduction, Amberts introduced himself and his background. He also delineated who might benefit from the book and the readers who are less likely to enjoy it. Amberts presented the main arguments and the ideological divide that often dominate the discussion. He summarized the main points in the second chapter, titled “The Four Premises,” which is just two pages long. Employing a thought experiment, he deepened and strengthened the arguments in Chapter Three, “The Room.” In Chapter Four, “Realer than Real,” he compared the difference between NDEs and earthly life to the difference between people’s day-to-day experiences of reality and dreams. Because the summary of the arguments made in Chapter Two is quite clear already, readers who do not need further convincing could stop reading after that chapter.

However, the author’s target audience consists of those people who might benefit from a deeper exploration of the arguments. For that audience, Amberts introduced a thought experiment in which only a subsection of people can enter a room, and everyone else has to rely on their description of the content of that room. Amberts argued that theoretically possible logical arguments against the validity of reported NDEs are not reasonable, as such arguments are empirically so unlikely that they can be considered extremely improbable and, thus, invalid. For example, as near-death experiencers (NDErs) are a random subset of the general population with different beliefs and propensities, it is practically impossible that all of their accounts would have been influenced by very similar religious beliefs or a common propensity for lying. The other argument that Amberts made is that humans can distinguish reality from dreams. Thus, when people are confronted with a reality that their senses tell them is more real than their everyday reality, they can be trusted in this perception just as much as in their everyday differentiation between experienced reality during wakefulness and dreams recalled from sleep. In both Chapters Three and Four, the author repeated arguments and supported them with quotes from experiencers—three pages of such quotes in chapter three and 20 pages in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five, “Muddying the Waters,” Amberts introduced differentiations that, for simplicity, were omitted in the preceding two chapters. He explained why his philosophical arguments hold up even

when considering different types and levels of NDEs. He finished the book with a summary and his conclusions in Chapter Six, challenging those who, despite all the arguments in favor of the existence of an afterlife, still doubt it to consider if their views might be tainted by ideological bias in that the rational arguments for such existence are, as the book title already indicated, “obvious.”

What I found particularly interesting about the book was the philosophical perspective Amberts took. For some readers, the way he presented the arguments might be too repetitive. The number of quotes he used is probably higher than would have been necessary to be convincing. In my opinion, some additional editing could have made the book an easier and more enjoyable read. That said, I found that Amberts fulfilled what he promised. He made it clear “why an afterlife obviously exists.” I recommend this book to the open-minded skeptics the author targeted and hope it reaches them.