Letters to the Editori

On "Evolution and the Relationship Between Brain and Mind States"

lo the Editor

This letter is written to comment on the article. "Evolution and the Relationship Helween Brain and Mind States" by Juan S Domez-Jeris and Carlos Madrid-Aliste in the Summer 1996 issue of the Journal. The entire Board of IANUS of Utah have signed this letter, since the orticle is so contrary to our findings.

Concerning Objectivity and the Scientific Method

The authors doth protest too much, we think. We find it interesting that individuals with pronouncements of "scientific objectivity". This is certainly true in the subject article, in which the authors stated. The need for keeping scientific objectivity in near-death studies is stressed by its particular miture. In fact, if a near-death researcher fills into peroclini attitudes, he or site will be exposed to two daily generaling with MDEre in a way leading to the so called 'self-things prophery'.

The observation is writed world' (p. 200) the of the definitions of science given in Websters 11 New College Dictionary (1995) is: "The observation, description experimental investigation, and theorems in Websters 12 New College Dictionary (1995) is: The observation, description experimental investigation, and theorems in the phenomenon that chooses to ignore a large class of data methodically collected during the observations would not be adentific. It certainly would not be adentificed in the phenomenon.

Monism Versus Dualism

The authors created the outlines of a rudimentary model that they argued could be used by researchers to study the near-death experience (NDE). They defined a brain state space Γ by means of a neurobiological model, and a consciousness state space Θ by means of a psychological model. They suggested that, although difficult, a possible relationship between Γ and Θ may, with further research, be determined. They wrote little about the practical difficulty of determining the neural activity during an NDE, or of determining the psychological state of the individual during the NDE, never mind the problems of finding a relationship between the two.

The principal problem with their model, though, is that, as they acknowledged, "we consider NDEs as a consciousness (purely psychological description)/brain (purely neurobiological description) state" (p. 265). In so doing, they completely rejected the possible dualistic nature of living beings, that is, the possible existence of a soul, spirit, or some other-dimensional existence.

Their argument, long and convoluted, for rejecting dualism was, briefly stated, that since science only knows of physical properties—and psychological properties that are related to the physical—any attempt to introduce a nonphysical mind lying in another plane would be nonscientific. They summed this up by writing: "we must conclude that when physical structures disappear, 'nonphysical minds' or 'nonphysical brain properties' also disappear" (p. 260).

The Evidence for Dualism

The primary NDE evidence against this point of view comes from the numerous out-of-body experiences in which an individual saw things that could not have been seen from the physical body, either because of position or because of the physical state of the body, and those things the individual claimed to have seen were later verified. These cases are, by now, so numerous that to deny them is to ignore a major aspect of the near-death experience. We shall not attempt to list the numerous cases available in the literature, but rather shall enumerate four cases with which we are intimately familiar.

The Shoe on the Ledge

Perhaps the most famous is that of Maria's shoe on the ledge, reported by Kimberly Clark Sharp (1995). In that experience, Maria had a massive heart attack for which she was being treated at the Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. She suffered a cardiac arrest in the hospital and was resuscitated, as witnessed by Sharp. During the arrest she had an NDE. After the NDE, and upon returning to consciousness, Maria was agitated and asked for Sharp to visit her. She explained to Sharp how she had left her body and what she had seen the medical people doing from her position up near the ceiling. Her statements coincided with what Sharp had seen. Maria described how she, in her out-of-body state, had left the hospital. Then, to prove her point, she insisted that she had seen a worn, blue tennis shoe on a ledge of the hospital three stories up, not visible from the ground. With much difficulty, Sharp searched for the shoe and found it

Sharp attended one of our IANDS of Utah meetings and described her feelings about this particular incident. She said that the shoe could only be seen from a west-side window by pressing against the pane. The shoe, as she retracted it, resembled Maria's description in detail.

A Traveling Experience

In his account of his extensive NDE during World War II, George Ritchie (Ritchie with Sherrill, 1978) described having been in a military hospital in Camp Barkley, Texas, as the result of an illness with an extremely high temperature of 106.5°. In his resulting NDE, Ritchie traveled in an out-of-body state with a spirit guide across a portion of the United States. At one point he found himself in a bar in a community near a military base, but far from Camp Barkley. He had never been there before.

Some weeks after his NDE, when his medical emergency was over, Ritchie was traveling in a car with three other young men as they entered Vicksburg, Mississippi. When they drove through a particular neighborhood, Ritchie recognized the area and told his companions where he wanted them to go. One of them said: "I thought you had never been in Mississippi before." It was the same location in which he had been during his NDE.

In 1995 our IANDS of Utah group sponsored a two-day meeting with Ritchie as the speaker. He described this and other events from his NDE in detail.

An NDE from Multiple Perspectives

One of the members of IANDS of Utah told of her experience in our August 1994 meeting; it is described in one of our newsletters (Gibson and Gibson, 1994). Susan Burt had a heart attack during the Caesarian delivery of twins. The medical personnel were unable to get a blood pressure reading for 10 to 15 minutes. During this time, Burt left her body and met a guide, her deceased aunt. She observed the doctors and nurses attempting to revive her, and she saw, helping them, other spirit persons.

In the meeting in which Burt explained what had happened to her, she also had other individuals describe the effects of the NDE from their perspectives. These persons included Cory Burt, her husband; Dianne Burton, her sister; Preston Richards, the anesthesiologist; and Betty Ishoy, one of the nurses. Their stories were fascinating, particularly that of the anesthesiologist, who confirmed Burt's view of what the medical personnel were doing during her NDE. He commented that there was no physical way she could have seen what she later described in detail. Not only was she unconscious, but he had taped her eyes shut to protect them during the emergency. In a later visit to the anesthesiologist's house, Burt was able to identify from a family photo album one of the his deceased ancestors as the spirit helper she had seen helping him.

A Blessing Seen During an NDE

The president of our local IANDS chapter is Bill English. In July, 1991, English and his brother Bob were riding their all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in the sand dunes near Saint Anthony, Idaho. English's machine threw him and he landed on his head, breaking his back at about the nipple level. After removal by helicopter to a local hospital, and later being transported to the University of Utah Medical Center in Salt Lake City, his medical emergency deepened. His brother was told that English probably would not live, and if he did live he would be paralyzed and need help for the rest of his life. English was comatose for more than four weeks. During that time he had two out-of-body experiences. The first one occurred on the

Sharp, K. C. (1995). After the light: What I discovered on the other side of life that can change your world. New York, NY: Morrow. Webster's II new college dictionary. (1995). Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin.

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