

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.

- 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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