

## **Response to Atwater**

To the Editor:

First, I must thank you for publishing my work in the Journal. My paper presented a fairly unique and controversial argument, and was bound to kick up a dust storm that the Journal could have just as easily sidestepped altogether. But you did not, for which I am very grateful, as that paper represents 14 years of my life's work.

And I thank P. M. H. Atwater for commenting on it. I have great respect for her; and to have her describe my work as "fascinating" and "impressive," admitting that it is supported by "compelling evidence"

and is “worthy of further investigation” was almost more than I could have hoped for. To bicker over mere details after such high praise seems almost petty.

However, there is one thing I should try to clarify. My work does not suggest, at least to me, that the division between the conscious and unconscious usually reaches a state of complete and total separation during near-death experiences (NDEs). The evidence suggests to me instead that the process of division often begins, but rarely if ever reaches totality, in the NDEr him- or her-self. Granted, we do see many parallel streams of evidence that seem to indicate that this process of division does begin in many NDEs, and would, perhaps, reach totality if the NDEr was never revived. However, if, as I have suggested, the division is never more than partial in most NDEs, one would not expect a complete absence of right-brain thought processes during the first phase, nor a complete absence of left-brain thought processes during the second phase, but only a noticeable reduction of same—for which my paper provided substantial evidence.

Moreover, I am also convinced that sometimes, probably only rarely, the division does not occur at all. Numerous streams of evidence suggest that the more spiritually evolved or psychologically integrated one is during life, the less likely one is to find one’s mind splitting into separate conscious and unconscious elements after death.

Atwater cited her own study indicating that only about one-third of NDErs recall encountering the darkness or tunnel in the first phase of their NDEs. But a conscientious observer would have to point out that other studies have suggested this number may be higher. Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick (1995) reported that the majority of NDErs in their study did find themselves in a tunnel, and fully two-thirds of their interview group reported experiencing the darkness (pp. 49–51).

Also, Atwater suggested that some of the ghosts she has worked with do not fit into the divided-soul scenario delineated by the Binary Soul Doctrine. But, curiously, she then went on to cite, as evidence for this contention, an encounter that did seem, at least to me, to follow the Binary Soul Doctrine pattern quite well. She describes a ghostly entity that not only had been unable to determine logically from the available evidence that it was dead, indicating a loss of logical reasoning ability, but also showed an unyielding predisposition to adhere to its previous mental programming and thought patterns, indicating a loss of creativity and autonomous free will: “Try as I may, I could not convince him it was all right to move on into the light realms. He stubbornly refused to budge without his parents’ permission.” My own research has taught me

that many other “ghostbusters” report essentially the same thing: that even on those rare occasions when they *are* able to interact with ghosts, they find all too often that these ghosts are frozen in fixed opinions and behavior patterns that resist all efforts at modification—exactly the sort of behavior the Binary Soul Doctrine would seem to predict.

In the final analysis, however, I feel Atwater and I are on the same page, both agreeing that this hypothesis is worth further research.

### References

Fenwick, P., and Fenwick, E. (1995). *The truth in the light: An investigation of over 300 near-death experiences*. London, England: Headline.

Peter Novak  
1428 Illinois Avenue  
LaPorte, IN 46350  
e-mail: novak@divisiontheory.com