

To the Editor:

This is to comment on the article entitled "Cardiac Arrest and Near-Death Experiences," by G. M. Woerlee in the Summer 2004 issue of the Journal. Woerlee wrote: "This article offers a full explanation of NDEs occurring during cardiac resuscitation based solely upon human physiology" (p. 235). But to make this "full explanation," he had to make several assumptions, seemingly taking them for granted. First, Woerlee assumed that the brain equals the mind. Second, he assumed that memory is entirely in the brain. Third, he assumed that the only form of consciousness is ordinary waking consciousness. And finally, he assumed that the mind is defined by ordinary waking consciousness.

Many who think the material world defines everything have taken for granted that the mind is defined by neuronal activity. Many who have not experienced (or have not recognized that they have experienced) other forms of consciousness make the mistake of assuming that there

are no other forms of consciousness. That is analogous to a group of blind persons deciding that no one can see. There is much evidence to the contrary, as examples of which I suggest the following.

First, alternate states of consciousness have been successfully used to influence health, control pain, and so on. It is not clear that these states of mind are all brain effects.

Second, our mind is the final decider of our mood, often countering bodily and external influences. A person can decide that he or she is going to be happy in spite of aches, pains, and less than positive situations. We can have free will, moral values, courage, creativity, love, and imagination. These things cannot all be done by the mechanics, chemistry, and electrophysiology of the brain. One certainly does not get will power from secreted chemicals that cause urges. We use our will power to buck those urges in order to remain moral or healthy.

Third, ordinary waking consciousness is not required for thinking. Waking brain action is not the source of all our intuitions and inspirations. We are sometimes even conscious of trying to return to ordinary waking consciousness, of trying to awaken from sleep. Some of our best thoughts do not come from wakeful analysis but are there when we awaken from sleep. In light of the fact that creativity occurs (and is indicated by electroencephalographic recordings consistent with creativity) when sensory stimuli and the associated brain functions are bypassed, it appears that the brain becomes involved with the *results* of thinking rather than with its generation. It is not clear that the brain is involved in the process of thinking except when it is necessary to utilize sensory input.

Fourth, language synthesis by the brain is not required for thinking. Language is needed only to prepare the thoughts for common communications. When we occasionally grope for the right word to convey a thought to someone else, we already have the intended thought even though we do not yet have the words to express it.

Fifth, artificial electrical stimulation has been used to map the various motor and sensory functions of the brain. However, no locus on the brain has been found at which artificial stimulation could cause a patient to believe or decide something.

Sixth, split-brain research data show that the mind is not totally a function of either hemisphere of the brain.

Seventh, brain handicaps do not always seem to be associated with mind handicaps. Clinical data imply that the mind is more durable than the brain.

Eighth, long-term memory capabilities seem to be unaffected by age.

Ninth, the only tissues involved with recall seem to be the tissues involved in the performance of the acts recalled. No place has been found in the brain that, when damaged, diseased, or removed, obliterates long-term memories. People who recover from a stroke sufficiently to demonstrate it still retain their knowledge from before the stroke.

Tenth, recall can be increased by altered states of consciousness, and recall is improved when two long-term acquaintances both try to remember something at the same time.

Eleventh, extrasensory phenomena are evidence of mental functioning without the assistance of the brain. Without using either the physical senses or brain motor functions, telepathy and clairvoyance are methods of communication, although sometimes not very accurate for some of us.

Twelfth, the results of meditation studies show that when sensory stimuli are bypassed, the mind can better use other information.

Thirteenth, there appears to be more to a person than can be explained by genes and environment, implying that some aspect of us is derived from some other source.

Fourteenth, some information derived from multiple personality cases implies that more than one consciousness can inhabit the same brain and body, and their different intelligence levels indicate that intelligence resides with the different consciousnesses.

Fifteenth, some small children claim to recall past lives spontaneously. Investigations have been reported in which researchers have corroborated places, people, and events mentioned by these children as having related to their past lives.

Finally, many of these children have unusual abilities and knowledge, the source of which their parents cannot explain. Some of these abilities have been verified to be skills that were learned by the personality the child claimed to have been in a previous life. Some phobias in these children have been traced to traumatic experiences endured by these past life personalities.

The evidence is extensive that the brain is not the mind, and that the mind can act independently of the brain. We have much evidence from many sources indicating that the brain is guided by the mind, but does not equate to the mind. We are more than can be explained by physiology alone. Space limitations do not permit me to do more here than just mention these types of evidence. Further details are provided in my book, *Marvelous Miracles of the Mind* (Ford, 2003).

References

- Ford, O. I. (2003). *Marvelous miracles of the mind: A study of the entreating mind's role in life and death*. Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library.
- Woerlee, G. M. (2004). Cardiac arrest and near-death experiences. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 22, 235–249.

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