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**THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE OF CARL G. JUNG**

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*Abstract: The term Near Death Experience (NDE) was created in 1975 by Dr. Raymond Moody Jr. in his ground-breaking book, "Life After Life." Therefore, when the psychologist Carl G. Jung described his NDE in his book "Memories, Dreams, Reflections" (1961/1989), he recalls it as a "vision". Jung's vision and/or NDE occurred in the hospital after a heart attack. He detached from his physical body and floated in space approximately 1,000 miles above earth. He had a painful period of adjustment following his ND state and was not able to convince his doctor that this had happened to him. Dr. Jung felt that he authored many of his principal works after this experience and he was no longer afraid to lose his professional reputation by discussing or writing about psychic phenomenon. He felt his work seemed to take on a life of its own and his thoughts flowed easily. There was also an acceptance of his life as it had been; that all of his experiences had been needed.*

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The term Near Death Experience (NDE) was created in 1975 by Dr. Raymond Moody Jr. in his ground-breaking book, *Life After Life*. Therefore, when the psychologist Carl G. Jung described his NDE in his book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections (MDR)*, (1961/1989), he recalls it as a *vision*. The below description has been taken from Chapter X and begins on p.289 of MDR.

The year was 1944 and Dr. Jung had broken his foot. Then he had a heart attack. He was taken to a hospital and felt he was on the verge of death. After his NDE, his nurse reported that while this had been happening to him, "It was as if you were surrounded by a bright glow" (p. 289). This description from research of nurses describing patients having NDEs in hospitals has been repeatedly reported. Some also report the glow as being a pale blue in color.

Afterwards, upon checking, Dr Jung realized that a person would have to have been approximately 1,000 miles above the earth,

floating in space, to see the sights that came into his view during his NDE. While he was floating above earth, he saw:

- “A globe of earth bathed in gloriously blue light
- A deep blue sea and continents
- Far below his feet lay Ceylon
- In the distance, the sub-continent of India.
- His field of vision did not include the whole earth but its global shape was plainly distinguishable.
- The earth’s outlines shown with a silvery gleam through that wonderful blue light.
- In many places, the globe seemed colored or spotted dark green like oxidized silver.
- To the left lay the reddish yellow desert of Arabia. It was then that the earth assumed a reddish gold hue.
- Then came the Red Sea and far, far back in the upper left of the map there was just a bit of the Mediterranean.
- His gaze was directed chiefly toward that. Everything else appeared indistinct.
- He could also see the snow-covered Himalayas, but in that direction it was foggy or cloudy.
- He saw a dark block of stone, like a meteorite. It was about the size of his house or even bigger. It was floating in space and so was he.
- The blocks of stone were similar to the ones he saw on the Gulf of Bengal – blocks of tawny granite and some of them had been hallowed out into temples.
- His stone was one such gigantic dark block.
- An entrance led into a small antechamber.
- To the right of the entrance a black Hindu sat silently in lotus posture upon a stone bench.
- The Hindu wore a white gown.
- Two steps led up to this antechamber and inside on the left was the gate to the temple.
- Innumerable tiny niches each with a saucer-like concavity filled with coconut oil and small burning wicks surrounded the door with a wreath of bright flames.
- He had once actually seen this when he visited the Temple of the Holy Tooth at Kandy in Ceylon.
- The gate had been framed by several rows of burning oil lamps of this sort.
- As he approached the steps leading up to the entrance into the rock he felt that his whole earthly existence had been taken from him and what remained was ‘a bundle’ of what he had

- accomplished. He felt full and empty at the same time. This bundle was everything that he had become.
- As he approached the stone temple, he had the certainty that he was about to enter an illuminated room and would meet there all the people to whom he belonged in reality.
  - When suddenly – up from below the direction of Europe, a likeness of his doctor floated up framed by a golden chain or a golden laurel wreath.
  - The doctor protested against Jung’s going away and told him he must return.
  - The moment he heard this, his vision ceased (pgs. 289-292).”

**Author’s Note: This list of NDE characteristics are Dr. Jung’s. The tense of some verbs have been changed to make it easier to read this list.**

### **Definition of a NDE:**

It is a profound subjective event experienced by persons who come close to death or who are believed dead and unexpectedly recover, as a result of serious injury or illness, or who confront a potentially fatal situation and escape uninjured.

Characteristics may be:

- Detachment from physical body
- Peace, contentment and a feeling of unconditional love;
- Passing through a dark tunnel;
- Seeing a brilliant light or divine being;
- Seeing loved ones who have died;
- A review of one’s entire life;
- Profound lessons about life and universal laws; and
- Sometimes a choice or forced to return to life to live in a new way that is congruent with what one has learned (Moody, 1975, pp. 10-70).

According to Dr. Bruce Greyson, Director of the Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, “the meaning of the term (NDE) is unclear as to how many of the characteristics must be satisfied” (JNDAE7 29 (4) 239-300 (2011), p. 465. Jung’s Out-of-Body (OOB) experience is one of the characteristics. Also, other criterion for a NDE is the connection with clinical death. Where Jung’s experience is more of a classic NDE is in his reaction after he returns to earth and his hospital room. He has a painful period of adjustment due to the fact that he lost the near-death state.

## **A Painful Period of Adjustment Follows a NDE State:**

Jung felt very angry at his doctor whose presence had returned him to life. He was also worried about him since he felt the doctor was going to die very soon because he had appeared in his vision. He tried to warn his doctor and explain his NDE. The doctor was unable to understand the NDE and ignored Jung's warning about his possible eminent death.

This is another classic problem people have after a NDE. They are often unable to make their family or friends understand the experience no less how much of an impact it had on them. Jung said that he was the doctor's last patient because "On April 4, 1944 when I was allowed to sit on the edge of my bed for the first time since my illness, my doctor took ill and ultimately died (MDR (1961/1989), p. 293)."

Jung suffered from depression for weeks after his NDE and stated what William James had discovered. That he did not have the words to explain the experience nor his feelings during it. "Gloomily, I thought, "Now I must go back to this drab world...Toward evening I would fall asleep and my sleep would last until about midnight. Then I would come to myself and lie awake for about an hour, but in an utterly transformed state. It was as if I were in an ecstasy...This is eternal bliss, I thought. This cannot be described; it is far too wonderful! (MDR (1961/1989), p. 293)."

He only wanted to eat after this enchanted part of the night when his nurse would bring him some food. He floated for many nights in "bliss" where he would describe gardens with wonderful floral smells, angels and the magical light that surrounded him. About three weeks after these blissful nights, all visions stopped. He felt the experience was something he never could have imagined. Another classic characteristic of a NDE was this knowing of how *real* the experience was to him. He felt he had really been to an eternal place.

Ruud van Wees, MA, from Bredevoort, The Netherlands, gave the statistics recently that 23 million people had a 'verge-of-death' or 'temporary death' experience, of which 8 million people also went through a 'mystical encounter' (p. 472, (JNDAE7 29 (4) (2011)). Dean Radin in his book *The Conscious Universe: Scientific Evidence for PSI Phenomena* (1997) stated that this human experience of the *real* "supports the concept of a deeply interconnected 'conscious universe,' not merely as a psychological coping mechanism, but as reality" (p. 293).

“Physician Jeffrey Long (Long & Perry, 2011) surveyed 613 NDErs online and found that 95.8% believed that their NDEs were ‘definitely real’ (Perry, 2011, p. 476). Intensification of all aspects of the mind from being aware, thinking, feeling, having sensations and very clear perceptions is an outstanding characteristic of a NDE which gives people a greatly expanded view of their consciousness.

PMH Atwater states in her *The BIG BOOK of NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES*(2007) “not only our faculties expand once we leave our bodies in what appears to be death, so do our consciousness, our mind and our sense of self” (p. 382). Jung stated that after this *vision*, he felt that he authored many of his principal works and he was no longer afraid to lose his professional reputation by discussing or writing about psychic phenomenon. (This fear for professionals still holds today.) His work seemed to take on a life of its own and his thoughts flowed. There was also an acceptance of his life as it had been as he felt that all of it had been needed; the so called mistakes were as necessary as much as what was labeled positive.

**Author’s Note: In order to truly be able to understand the full impact of Jung’s NDE or *vision*, it is suggested that you read his full description in MDR (1961/1989). Thank you.**

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