

and fails to state the possibility of reality-distortion by the psycho-anesthesia of mouse cat-caught  
\*i.e., anything explicit. P.97 leans toward overreading "love" and "knowledge" and "self-realization"

1. As a successful therapy gets contexted first into a metaphysic and then into a religion (e.g., Proffoff), the discovery of a common pattern or structure in a number of cases gets converted first into a scientific hypothesis, next into an ontological thesis, and finally into a religious affirmation. My great surprise was that Moody has, in this book, stopped short of stage three and even expressed a humble, scientifically and morally proper, tentativeness about stage two. I have two clues as to why he has avoided the slump into hubris: (1) He did a PhD in philosophy before taking his MD and becoming a psychiatrist [and taught logic!], and (2) His book-dedication hints at a profound religious experience under the influence of a fellow MD.
2. As I myself have had experience of editors' distorting my context by their titling, I should not have been misled--but was--but the subtitle, "The investigation of a phenomenon--survival of bodily death." Pp.147f and 152 delimit "bodily death," but the quick reader of the subtitle will not know that the term "bodily" is being used technically and consequently will read that "survival of death" is a "phenomenon," i.e. true, objectively-scientifically real, a religious affirmation Moody nowhere makes. The misimpression is made worse on the paperback cover: "Actual case histories that reveal there is life after death." Even though the author warns against using his research to draw the direct conclusion that there is life after death! I came close to not giving the book a chance, thinking it in the misty gnostic occult category or in Kubler-Ross's pseudo-scientific realm of the afterlife as proved.
3. At this I am amazed: I take no exception to anything\* in the book, not even on matters on which I'm better informed than he is (e.g., Bible)! How refreshing, severe critic that I am! PTL (Praise The Lord)!
4. The old argument "There ain't no hell/The hell there ain't" is, in many current death-and-dying books, resolved in the sentimental direction of dying and afterlife as sweetness and light. Biblically, this removes this empirical area from the moral dimension: threat (the essential other side of promise) and punishment (the essential other side of reward) disappear, and the afterlife loses its sanctional value feedback on life here-and-now--e.g., Jesus' Lazarus/Dives parable dies, or at least loses its teeth. Now, heaven/hell are apocalyptic-rhetorical, beginning with Dan.12.2 (NAB: "everlasting horror and disgrace") and reaching its highest intensity in Jesus my Lord--so that a de-moralization of the afterlife is an attack on my Lord and so on me. But Moody is misread if one concludes that he is of the sweetness-and-light school. Rather, he cautiously states that we are not to conclude, from his cases of resuscitants, that the condition of their consciousness between "death" and resuscitation is to be generalized as the permanent condition of the dead: if the person had passed the gate of no return, the person would have experienced what no person could ever have reported to us--e.g., heaven/hell, reincarnation, etc. Further, early after-death experience includes being asked a question "to make him examine his life" (22) --and, in suicide cases, even the early after-death experience is "unpleasant" (143), "uniformly" so (though the general pattern is "joy, love, and peace" (22) up to the border from which one returns back to this world). I would have preferred that Moody be even more cautious, protecting his message even more than he does from overextension into an amoral, narcissistic view of the afterlife. (Of course the Bible is not the only document of the ancients involving judgment in the afterlife: e.g., The Egyptian Book of the Dead, and chap.10 of Plato's "Republic.")
5. Our heightened technological ability to resuscitate is providing us with many more cases, and we should be open to the possibility that (177) "we may have to devise new modes of explanation and interpretation." Meanwhile, avoid hermeneutic captivity by the vested interests of guilds (pharmacology, physiology, neurology--and I must add philosophy, psychology, sociology, and even theology!). and (I add) internecine squabbings between paradigms within each guild (e.g., the interpretation of the light phenomenon by Freudians as father-projection and by Jungians as the surfacing

of the light-archetype).

6. The book is a beautiful model of scientific thinking that is modest and of clear writing that avoids shoddy logic--both philosophically and scientifically, careful. Theology, too, can be and must be written up to this double virtue..... On the side of logic, he's forever pricking the bubble of those who think they are explaining when they are only "substituting one mystery for another" (174), "a bafflement for an enigma" (169), like defining a word by another word whose meaning also is unknown [my analogy, not Moody's].

7. A comment on his p.149 statement: "Through all of my research I have not heard a single reference to a heaven or a hell anything like the customary picture to which we are exposed in this society." Hell-rejecting heaven-accepters will tend to read this as though he'd said "I found no evidence of hell"! I recall this from George Eliot: "Father, I choose. I will not have a heaven haunted by faroff cries from hell; my heart has grown too big with what might be." I passionately associate myself with her in this noble utterance: I reject a "literal" hell (but also, logically, a "literal" heaven--and also a "literal" current divine judgment in action in heart and history? No, but the impossibility of defining "literal" here signals the presence of the mystery of theodicy, of judgment, of Malkuth-Kingdom). Jesus used a rigorist language in his rhetoric (e.g., on divorce and on the afterlife), but the scribes accused his life of being insufficiently rigorist toward sinners: his ethic was like a pingpong ball on both sides of the legalistic net. When life closes down on us here or hereafter, God weeps and Christ bleeds: in the presence of the angels there is no joy when we use our freedom to constrict our own life or the life of others. That is one truth. And its parallel is this: There is no automatic deliverance from the constriction--say, pardon after five years. Deliverance is possible only by the moral use of freedom to "return" (Hebrew, "repentance"; Greek, "change of mind"). And an overarching truth: Whether or not the repentance-opportunity extends beyond the grave or cremation, some of the consequences of the constriction are ineradicable, and in this sense "punishment" is "eternal" and so the hell sanction has permanent validity. The Lazarus/Dives parable still bites into the social conscience, and may it ever!

8. A midrange of useful heuristic hermeneutics exists between gullibility and cold, scientific "proof," "explanation," "evidence." Moody works, as must theologians, in this midrange, which I would call the existential.

9. The author hypothesizes (151) "that death is a separation of the mind from the body, and that mind does pass into other realms of existence at this point. It would follow that there exists some mechanism whereby the soul or mind is released upon death." This is the book's only essay into speculation, and it is a modest one: "let us hypothesize...." Wilder Penfield's recent proof of mind/brain differences (e.g., only the latter sleeps) tilts in this direction. Biblically, this particular speculation is no more threatening than is the evolution speculation threatening to the Jewish and Christian doctrine of creation....While the metaphors of sleep and forgetting imply in themselves the annihilation of consciousness, the massive weight through history and around the world is on the side of the conviction of persistence (of consciousness or being or self or psyche or soul or spirit or mind).

10. A note on consciousness-altering, by: private devotion, public worship, "meditation"-contemplation, isolation (in Jn. Lilly's tank or Jesus' wilderness), psychotropic drugs, near-death experience [events, not dreams], cerebral anoxia (e.g., my carboxygen trip, the oxygen being out of my brain 2 1/2 minutes, and I having during that hour many of the experiences Moody describes).