

# Review of: "God's characteristics as reported by near-death experiencers"

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The article by Tressoldi & Long (2023), "*God's characteristics as reported by near-death experiencers*" replicates previous research by Long & Perry (2016) using different databases and inclusion/exclusion criteria. The merit of this new study is to analyze the database of near-death experiences (NDEs) and near-death-like experiences while using more open criteria for inclusion. This wider case horizon is the positive side of the study by Tressoldi & Long (2023). Incidentally, the exclusion criteria and their operationalizations need to be clarified, since the examples reported could also meet inclusion criteria.

However, there is essentially a downside. The database is based on strong limitation criteria, i.e., strong assumptions of God's epiphany as Light, Love, and Universality. This optimistic view can be considered a "reductionist" monotheistic assignment to God's characters (despite God's free Will). This *reductionism* of monotheism is typical of Augustine of Hippo's conception ("Evil is the absence of God") and later adopted by Lutheran, Calvinist, and, in general, all the Reformation and Humanitarian Churches. Consequently, the negative sides of God (e.g., Darkness, Sin, etc.) are ontologically and *dogmatically* both absent and non-existent, but they only reside in the hearts of humans who do not follow God's principles. In other words, according to this "reductionist" theology, Evil has no ontological existence, but it only assumes various phenomenological aspects in creatures and living beings. Only Good, Love, Light, Happiness, Fraternity, Friendship, and so on exist in God. This *reductionism* of the idea of God (which is also a strong limitation of God's Will) characterizes, more specifically, the items of NDE test in both versions (Greyson, 1983; Martial et al., 2020).

In general, databases used in these studies are biased because they only record the positive experiences of Light, Love, Universality, and so on, thus missing (or voluntarily omitting) negative experiences of Darkness, Conflict, negative Personalism, etc.

Another drawback of databases, and consequently to these studies, is that they must report data about non-respondents. There is usually a large number, for example, of patients coming out from a coma who do not perceive anything interesting about spiritual experiences.

A third disadvantage is that the study did not report any information about the ethnicity/race of respondents. Consequently, interesting questions are excluded, such as the color of the "skin of God" that still needs a response.

In conclusion, the article by Tressoldi & Long (2023) has the merit of replicating the findings of Long & Perry's (2016) without the strong constraint on case selection relying on scores of NDE scale. However, this article and this book have

similar limitations due to the "reductionist" conception of God since both used databases to undermine God's Will.