

Review of: "The Near-Death Experience and the Question of Immortality: A Philosophical Approach"

Christopher Turner

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The author is to be commended for an engaging philosophical confrontation with some examples of the near-death experience (NDE) literature that wants to suggest some kind of conscious life after the death of the physical body. The singularly interesting question asked in the paper, "Would everlasting life be truly desirable?", undergirds an inquiry into the various epistemologies employed by those who have written their NDEs into, usually profoundly mystical, literary claims to have new and unique insight into what the post-death consciousness apprehends.

Perhaps the engaging style of the paper lies in the unequivocal stance of the author on the side of what is called "the real world," which is categorised as a world of "science and technology" (page 9). How a metaphysical category such as the real world can be so easily reduced to the epistemologies of science, and the activities we know as technology, is an argument that the author doesn't seem to think is necessary to make. And herein lies the vulnerability of the paper. The arguments are engaging on the basis of their easy polarity with the NDE accounts chosen for the analysis. The polarity is further established by limiting the analysis to representatives of NDE that easily fall foul of good reasoning and rational argument.

The first paragraph of page 10 tantalisingly lists authors who purportedly offer a more objective, scholarly, and at least genuinely philosophical analysis of the NDE phenomena. The author's argument would, in my view, do better to engage in critical debate with the best NDE scholarship instead of the easy targets. I agree with the author that first-hand accounts of NDEs are worth including, however distorted their sense of reality might be. If the author wants to make the philosophical point that life beyond death may not be worth contemplating, however, then a critique of the most robust analysis of those first-hand accounts will provide a more credible basis for the argument.

The most compelling and interesting aspect of the paper is its primary question, "Would everlasting life be truly desirable?" The question leads the author into an analysis of some notions of the nature of time as everlasting and the sense that the limits of time and the experience of time may or may not contribute to its meaning and purpose.

Philosophical and theological factors are taken into account in the discussion that whets the reasoning appetite. The theological debate is somewhat limited by an analysis of the easy targets of popular religion. More nuanced theological ideas of time and eternity such as those argued by Paul Tillich would lend the argument depth and breadth.^[1] Tillich explores the impact of finitude on the experience of existence, the nature of time as having qualities such as the quality of *kairos*, which describes moments in time that feel 'pregnant' with historical importance under the influence of finitude. Though the author touches on the theological qualities of time in the discussion of the gospels, the arguments are

reduced to the idea that theological meaning is derived via religious submission rather than the genuine existential sense that time is meaningful when imbued by the sense of justice and common humanity by the feeling of finitude.

Nevertheless, as a statement of a worthy philosophical question, I reiterate that this paper is to be commended. Any paper that initiates a conversation, entices the reader to explore, critique and continue questioning as this paper does, is well worth the reading.

References

1. [^] Paul Tillich. (1968). *Systematic Theology Vol 1*. James Nisbet & Co LTD.