Survival of Consciousness After Death

Based ON The Theory of Correspondences

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# Overview

Does consciousness survive bodily death? This question remains a profound, perennial mystery. Although scientific studies have focused on out-of-body experiences (OBEs) and near-death experiences (NDEs), there is scant evidence to support the claim that consciousness survives death. Many speculative theories state that consciousness moves through various afterlife realities. Tantalizing clues are found in world religion, esoteric philosophy, extrasensory perception, hypnotic regression, and scientific experimentation.

At the present time, there is an abundance of theoretical scholarly discourse on the topic of “survival”. After 60 years of NDE research, common ground has been established from NDEers’ anecdotal evidence and perceptual experiences. Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and Plato discussed the journey of consciousness (reason, psyche, desires) as a natural, cyclical system of birth and death. Their theories are unlike Eastern concepts of reincarnation, focus on an impersonal form of spiritual purification, reunification with an Infinite Source, and the extinguishing of karma.

The Pre-Socratics and Plato developed the Theory of Transmigration, which includes “birth to death” cycles. However, their approach includes: (a) a personal form of expanding consciousness, (b) the attainment of higher knowledge, (c) experiential learning, and (d) helping others reach a state of fulfillment. This proposition of survival is based on the Theory of Correspondences as proposed by Plato and Aristotle. The natural design of “conception to birth consciousness”, finds common ground with the natural design of “death to after-death consciousness”. The symmetry of consciousness entering and exiting the body, are theoretically archetypes for survival during pre-conception and postmortem survival.

# Introduction

There is one miracle that every human has experienced. This is the biological process by which conception occurs, thus marking the beginning of a new life. However, neither the sperm nor the egg contain human consciousness. Through reductionism, only these two elements merge for human fertilization to occur. How did this process come to be? Who is the architect? Why is the process of conception taken for granted as an automatic, mechanical system? Some will say, “birth is part of Nature’s plan”. Others may say “creating a new life is a cosmic mystery”. In either case, a natural evolutionary design moves consciousness forward during the birth process.

The beginning of a new human life can be explained biologically, but medical science cannot explain if consciousness is pre-existent or appears from brain activity. Interestingly, a first-hand account from “Deborah” offers a narrative that describes her experience in a pre-existent state of consciousness:

I remember being in a realm, of indescribable beauty and profound peace and joy. It felt like an incredible spaciousness without boundaries . . . I was without a physical body, I was light. And surrounding me were many others . . . like orbs of the most incredible iridescent light. We communicated via telepathy, and they endowed upon me such an extreme joy and support. There were many of them, and I was connected to all, a sense of belonging and knowing is the best way I can say this. I was standing at a ledge looking down at the earth, overcome with the most incredible emotions. I could see who my parents would be . . .their expectant faces, I did not choose them but rather the opportunity . . . “the learning” that would be mine . . . I too was filled with such gladness; it is beyond expression, and my words here . . . they are like feeble attempts at truly capturing what I felt. I will never forget this. I then remember going through a spiraling tunnel and then a feeling of white static . . . I can only equate with the static of a TV that has no channel . . . and then I am aware, in a physical body, laying in the darkness of my crib. (prebirthmemories.com, 2024)

Pre-existence of consciousness before birth is essential to Plato’s Theory of Transmigration (cycles of life and death). In most cases, knowledge from a previous life is forgotten at birth. The individual must relearn knowledge during life, but not as acquiring new information, but as remembering previously known information [Plato’s Theory of Recollection]. (Gulley, 1954). Similar narratives about prenatal consciousness include common elements during this stage. These anecdotes pertain to awareness, brain activity, time periods during pregnancy, and the role of a transcendent source:

To summarize the prenatal data, the regression research suggests that a transcendent source of consciousness exists before birth. While the brain lacks measurable coordinated activity until the third trimester, the transcendent source with its mature, unchanging awareness may be present even before conception. It seems to be spatially and temporally limited to an area immediately around the fetal body or the mother from conception up to an extreme limit of two days after birth. At some point during the pregnancy or perinatal period, the transcendent source becomes "stuck" to its body with less freedom to dissociate its quasi-independent selfhood from that of the fetus. For the majority of people, this joining coincides with the period when measurable brain wave activity commences. (Wade, 1998)

**Stages of Birth**

From the time of pre-conception through the process of birth, a new life is created. The fertilized egg (zygote) progresses through four basic generative stages during prenatal development:

1. Conception: within hours of ovulation, the sperm fertilizes the egg and the zygote is formed.
2. Germinal: begins following conception. The zygote unites in one of the two fallopian tubes.
3. Embryonic: a mass of cells begins to take shape.
4. Fetal: development of the embryo continues until birth.

This description establishes four transitional phases of pregnancy according to medical science. The inner workings of these stages provide an archetype that theoretically corresponds to four stages after death. This symmetry between pre-natal consciousness and after-death consciousness offers a four-stage framework for cyclical existence and survival (Song et al., 2017).

## Corresponding Stages of Birth and Death

As babies are born, they are pulled through a dark, bone-walled, narrow birth canal. This must be an intensely frightening experience. They are leaving behind the liquid world of amniotic fluid and entering a new world of life-sustaining air. The baby is pulled upward from the dim light of the embryonic sac and (usually) into a different light at the end of the birth canal. Newborns are naturally confused and may not realize they are separated from the mother. In the first eight weeks, they have little control over their movements, but are aware of sensations, physical activities, and sound.

Correspondingly, when death occurs, NDEers speak of the emotional difficulties of leaving their body and feeling a floating sensation pulling them upward. Their senses are aware of these new circumstances, but they are confused by not having control over their movements. NDEers are being taken away from their former life-sustaining world and begin moving toward a long dark tunnel within an ethereal body. With mixed emotions, fear, and bewilderment they are pulled through a mysterious tunnel (or conduit), and eventually see a different (bright) light. While in the presence of this light, most NDEers report feelings of wonder, bliss, peace, and love. After a brief time, a powerful vacuum of suction draws the NDEers back to the physical body.

Researchers on NDE have studied and collected scientific data since the 1960’s. Anecdotal evidence from study participants have led researchers to discover many common elements regarding this phenomenon. Here is a narrative of a young girl that encapsulates the basic aspects a typical NDE:

When I was 13 years old, I was in northern Michigan at my family’s cabin and came down with a 106-degree fever. I remember trying to fall asleep and feeling too hot. And then I began to notice the room getting darker and the moonlight disappearing. Then, the really weird stuff began to happen. I started to float up towards the ceiling, even though my body was still lying on the bed. My pain completely vanished and soon I was being pulled down a long, dark tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, there was a blinding white light and a sense of peace, calmness and utter joy. It was fantastic! (Mapes, 2010)

## Post-NDE

At the end of the NDE, consciousness returns to the body. NDERs claim that the perception of the light is a point of demarcation for either returning to the body or moving into the unknown. At this stage, if NDEers have two possibilities: (a) The NDE ends, and nothing more occurs or (b) postmortem consciousness survives and continues on a predetermined pathway. If the NDEer’s consciousness does not return to the body, then this phenomenon is no longer an NDE, but rather a death-experience (DE). NDE research has provided an impressive body of literature worldwide. Data from thousands of scientific studies support the claim that consciousness survives death for a brief time during the NDE. At the present time, the common elements of the NDE are widely known and have become part of the culture in many countries.

Theoretically, during the DE, the deceased progresses to a higher plane of consciousness. Correspondingly, after birth, the newborn evolves to a higher plane of consciousness as well. In both instances a human being: (a) moves from one world to another, (b) progresses through a long dark tunnel, and (c) finds itself in the presence of a different (brighter) light. Additionally, consciousness is advancing while the natural processes of birth and death are evolving. According to Plato’s Theory of Transmigration, the two opposites of birth and death automatically continue to the next stage of life cycle.

# Consciousness

The word “consciousness” refers to the sense of “I AM” or being aware of your existence. It is your subjective experience of Being, thinking, and feeling. Descartes claims that consciousness gives us the ability to say, “I Think, Therefore I AM”. Consciousness is always conscious of itself, and of its validity and integrity (Tononi & Koch, 2015). The three definitions of consciousness include awareness and response, subjective experience perceived by the mind and self-conscious knowledge of one’s personality and identity.

As a concept, the notion of consciousness is unquantifiable. Scientific studies cannot demonstrate quantitatively the issue of the brain generating consciousness. In the publication *New Scientist,* the front cover asks the question “Is the Universe Conscious?” (Spinney, 2020). This idea is receiving more attention in the fields of philosophy and neuroscience. According to Spinney (2021), “With each new advance in our understanding comes a new sense of wonder, and a new ability to see ourselves as less apart from — and more a part of — the rest of nature.”

Turning to world religions and esoteric traditions, the symbol of the highest level of consciousness is the *Infinite Source*. This unknown reality has many names and titles including: *The Ultimate Reality, The No-Thing Without End, Universal Oneness, The Void, Being/Non-Being, The Absolute, The Thing-In-Itself*, and other specific names and titles. While attempting to describe this Infinite Source, the following words apply: incomprehensible, no-thing, omniscient, omnipresent, boundless, limitless, boundless, eternal, never-ending, everlasting, etc.

## An Infinite Source

Unique and divergent conceptual schemes, symbols, metaphors, and models express the differing beliefs about an Infinite Source. Within these expressions, various questions arise concerning the nature and the existence/non-existence of such a transcendent reality.

Despite the artificial differences conjured-up by individuals to describe this incomprehensible concept, it is possible to identify corresponding names/titles in world religions, esoteric philosophies, and ancient wisdom traditions. There are many similarities found in describing an Infinite Source in scholarly discourse. Here are examples found in academia that pertain to name or titles that symbolize this highest level of cosmic consciousness:

1. Nirguna Brahman in Hinduism,
2. Para Brahman in Vedanta-Advaita Hinduism,
3. Tathatā, in early Buddhism, Nirvana in Theravada Buddhism, Dharmakaya or empty sunyata in Mahayana Buddhism.
4. Taiji – the unmanifest Tao in Taoism,
5. Perennialism, or the Perennial Philosophy, that has its roots in Neo-Platonism and its idea of the One, from which all existence emerges. Prior to existence, it symbolizes primordial substance in its essence as unmanifested.
6. Ein Sof – incomprehensible Nothingness before manifesting and reflecting downward to form the Tree of Life. The same concept is found in Hermetic Qabala, Jewish Kabbalah and Christian Cabala.
7. The Unmanifest Absolute of Hahut in Sufism.
8. Immanuel Kant - The Unmanifest or “The Thing Within Itself” alluding to The Void, Emptiness, and Nothingness which have the potential to create a universe and everything in it.
9. Georg Hegel – “The Absolute” as an ultimate reality and truth which encompasses and reconciles all contradictions and opposites. It is the culmination of the dialectical process, where opposing forces and ideas are synthesized into a higher unity.

## Spark of Life

In many spiritual and philosophical traditions, consciousness manifests as a vivifying spark in every living being. On the physical plane, this spark of consciousness enters the human zygote during conception. Correspondingly, there is a release after death and the spark of consciousness exits the body. According to Plato’s “Cycle of Opposites” the energy within consciousness moves the transmigration process forward as it continues its journey. Cycles of birth and death include six constants that effect the advancement of consciousness: (a) entering and exiting the body during life cycles, (b) continuous evolution of mind, (c) gaining superior knowledge, (d) exploring innate passions, (e) experiencing new depths of emotion, and (f) increasing compassion for all living things.

### Cycles of life and Death

By observing Nature, the Pre-Socratics were the first to notice the commonalities and interconnectedness of opposites such as birth and death. Plato expanded on the Theory of Opposites and concluded that birth and death move through a cyclical, regenerative phase during the afterlife. Although opposites are two ends of a spectrum, the seeds of both polarities are within one element. Since the observation of day and night are opposite times of one day, birth and death are opposite times in one life cycle. The same correspondence is found in Taoism symbolized by “yin-yang”, with two opposing qualities embedded by Nature.

Accordingly, the energy of consciousness acts as a prime mover for the cycles of Nature to move forward. Eventually, consciousness completes its cycle, regenerates, and begins again. However, Plato stated, if the higher mind of consciousness does not wish to continue its cycle, it may do so, because of its advancements in knowledge, purification and experience (Cranney, 2005). The following sections discuss the cycle from a historical perspective.

The Pre-Socratics.

 Ancient Greek philosophy (650–450 BCE) started with the premise that nothing happens after death. This assumption was unpopular and a difficult theory to accept since death became the final ending to life. The earliest author of text fragments is Anaximander of Miletus (611-547 BC). He wrote the “Principle of Sufficient Reason”. This principle states: “No event can happen without a reason for it to happen”. This reason is known as its foundation or ground. Anaximander speaks of “Real Being” defined as: “Never-changing Being that is not affected by Becoming”. Anaximander explained that Real Being is Boundless, Limitless, Absolute, All That Is – or an Infinite Source (Warren, 2014).

Pythagoras (570–495 BCE) developed the “Doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls”, to explain that at death souls are released from the body and periodically enter another body at birth. Each soul experiences opposing existences as male or female. Eventually, the cycle ends with a union of human essence with the divine (Horkey, 2021).

Parmenides (circa. 515 BCE) showed that there are natural opposing forces, which are merely several aspects of the same thing: healthy and sick, good and bad, hot and cold, love and hate, etc. (Peterson, 2008)

Heraclitus (circa. 500 BCE) proposed the “Unity of Opposites Doctrine”. The doctrine stated that opposing forces coincide as one. “The same things in us are living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old”. He postulated opposites exist within the connectedness of all things. (Neels, 2018)

Plato (428 –347 BCE) believed in the “Principle of Opposites”. Plato explained the duality of: (a) something and nothing, (b) action and non-action, (c) life and death, and (d) dark and light. Human consciousness continues to be born from the opposite realm of the dead and continues until purified. Additionally, Plato expanded on Pythagoras’s “Doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls” (Harte, 2008). Pre-Socratic philosophers and Plato are consistent in their beliefs that Nature’s opposing qualities intertwine naturally on a cyclical basis. One will transform into the other.

#### Plato’s Phaedo.

 Scientists and researchers are consistent in their adoption of the word consciousness instead of “soul”. Both words find common elements consistent in science and philosophy. Consciousness is a simple, pure, uncompounded, invisible, rational entity. It is composed of three elements: (a) psyche, (b) spirit, and (c) desire. In its original divine state, consciousness is pure, and any impurity emanates from its contact with the earth. According to Plato, it is the vivifying principle of life that is rational, divinely intelligent, and nurtured on true knowledge. He also defined consciousness as pre-existent, supreme, and self-moving. (Bostock, 2001)

Plato introduced the concept that consciousness will encounter new worlds where it temporarily resides to rest, learn, and integrate its life experiences. He provided a logical explanation to support the claim that consciousness is immortal. In Phaedo, Plato mentioned other attributes of soul-consciousness:

1. Humanity does not attain consciousness at the moment of birth. It enters with pure qualities before birth.
2. Individual consciousness (or individuality) is the animating principle of life and the storehouse of knowledge. This knowing part of us must be capable of existing while we are not alive.
3. Plato’s “Doctrine of Recollection” provided logical evidence that consciousness existed before birth. When we learn something new, we are not acquiring new knowledge, but recalling something we knew before birth. Since our consciousness has existed before, Plato concluded there must be a continuing stream of collective and individual consciousness.
4. Consciousness is the eternal pilgrim that carries forward the qualities of higher mind, creativity, and the divine spark of life. It does not submit to death, instead it begins to progress in the face of death.
5. Consciousness is intangible and invisible, while our bodies are tangible and visible.
6. Consciousness endures because it is eternal. The body dies because it is temporary. When Plato spoke of consciousness, the thought of immortality was always present, had a divine origin, and was eternally pre-existent. All that was required of consciousness once it has entered the body, is to purify itself from the physical world and return to its divine origin (Peltonen, 2019).

According to Plato, the purpose of the philosophical life is to free consciousness from the needs of the physical body. Since death is the final separation of consciousness from the body, Plato believed a philosopher already knows what to expect. If the philosopher has gained wisdom that death is a process of natural continuation, the transition to the afterlife will not be fearful, confusing, or disappointing.

In early Greek philosophy, Plato offered the most detailed account on the cycle of consciousness. He stated that “birth of the dead moves into the world of the living”, which reinforced his argument that consciousness is constantly shifting between two opposite states of existence. Plato's doctrine of birth and rebirth (transmigration) was a dominant principle in Greek philosophy for hundreds of years (Greco, 1996).

#### Plato’s Transmigration versus Reincarnation.

Plato mentioned three stages of consciousness: pre-existence, existence, and post-existence. Unlike Eastern traditions that teach the principle of reincarnation, Plato argued that human consciousness has existed since eternity in a perfect celestial world. In contrast, the Hindu belief in reincarnation asserted that humanity was created from a primordial impersonal essence known as Brahman.

It is important to note the differences between early Eastern beliefs in reincarnation versus cycles of birth and death in Plato’s Phaedo. Plato stated that the personal identity of consciousness progresses during transmigration primarily to acquire higher knowledge. In contrast, most Eastern traditions strongly emphasized that karma needs extinguishing during a series of reincarnations (Frede, 2001). Plato believed that personal self-consciousness climbs a spiritual ladder toward purification and returns to a purified personal existence of pure Being. Transmigration does not represent the voyage of an impersonal essence (as does Hindu’s atman), nor does it move toward an impersonal union with an Infinite Source – Brahman (Ehnmark, 1957).

Plato spoke of areas beyond the first level of the afterlife. He explained that these regions were the essence of true Being, which have no color or form. These abstract levels of existence are intangible and visible only to those with higher levels of intelligence and philosophical knowledge. Variations on cycles of consciousness during birth and re-birth are in ancient texts, world religions, wisdom traditions, and modern scientific studies.

#### Other Traditions.

 In the biblical book, “Ecclesiastes” by King Solomon, revealed a well-known verse about opposites: “A time to be born, a time to die.” From the “Bhagavad Gita,” Krishna told Arjuna, “For one that is born, death is certain, and certain is birth for the one that has died.” In the “Dhammapada,” Buddha stated: “Long is the cycle of birth and death to the fool who does not know the true path.” From the “Hebrew Bible,” G-d told Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, And before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations.” In Taoism, Lao Tzu asserted, “Life and death are one thread, the same line viewed from different sides”. Many Christians search for clues in the Bible regarding cycles of life and death. Depending on one’s interpretation of being “born again”. Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). This contextual indication of “being born again” may connote reincarnation.

### Four Levels of Reality

There are common threads of wisdom in comparative religion, ancient philosophy, and esoteric traditions. When comparing Eastern and Western teachings throughout the millennia, four basic stages relate to cycles of life and death. These stages infer the existence of a universal pattern of birth, life, death, and regeneration, which become an archetype for Plato’s theory of transmigration.

There are four levels of consciousness in the following traditions: (a) Plato’s Academy, (b) Theravada Buddhism, (c) Hinduism, (d) Elysian Mystery Schools, (e)Hermetic Qabala, (f) Jewish Kabbalah, (g) Christian Cabala, (h) Sufism, (i) Tibetan Book of the Dead, and (j) Egyptian Mystery Schools. Interestingly, Nikola Tesla proposed the existence of four levels of consciousness that make up the universe and beyond. His theory of four stages of consciousness encapsulated 5,000 years of religious and philosophical theories. His metaphysical ideas incorporated major themes of the past. He claimed “energetic sparks of consciousness” are destined to follow a natural pathway to the highest realms. Telsa’s theory resembles the Platonic model: (a) Dualism (mind and body) exists on the earth plane, where physical death occurs (Descartes); (b) release of an ethereal body (as reported by NDEers); (c) shedding of the ethereal Body and releasing a Creative Force; and (d) shedding the Creative Force Body and the release of consciousness into a monistic (non-dual) state of Becoming. According to Tesla (1901), “If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration.” (Alabdulgader, 2021)

### Scientific Studies

In an article from “Philosophy Now”, Williams (2003), identifies one kind of afterlife as “survival taking place outside the body as a disembodied mind.” Additionally, neurologists are investigating the possibility of eternal consciousness (NEC), which does not depend on a functioning brain. This type of evidence would prove the scientific case for survival.

IONS (Institute of Noetic Sciences) is a leading organization that is actively pursuing many avenues of inquiry into survival of consciousness (IONS, 2024). In one study, Delorme et al. (2022) theorized that consciousness moves through four after-death stages:

Level 1: Pure awareness survives. Personal identity and memories vanish. What survives can be seen as a formless, transcendent state, with no perception of the environment being different than itself.

Level 2: Awareness and limited sense of identity survive. Dying would feel like waking up from a dream without remembering who you are or where you are.

Level 3: Awareness and identity survive. This includes memories of the immediate past life and perception of the environment.

Level 4: Awareness and identity survive and can interact with the physical world. One’s sense of identity survives, as well as memories of environments and many past lives.

Scientists and researchers at IONS recognized that presently, there is a lack of scientific evidence or qualitative data that answers the question of “What survives after death?” The researchers at IONS (2024) asked 422 scholars in the United States: “Would positive outcomes from after-death experiments influence your beliefs about survival of consciousness”? These scholars reported being neutral in facing the question.

#### Evidence of Survival.

 Many speculative theories tried to prove survival of consciousness. Hypnotherapists reported that during regression therapy, patients visualized their death. Next, they moved to an in-between state, and returned to life in a new incarnation. Many patients perceived a specific time and place when they died in a prior life. Others remembered locations, prior names, years they were alive, names of family members, and how they died.

With past-life regression, there is a tendency for patients to experience a state of “in-between lives.” In one case, a child under 5 years old reported the following observation while in-between lives:

James’ memories were those of an intermission period between his former incarnation and his present life. One day, James told his father (Bruce), that he (James) had picked him because he knew his father would be a “good daddy”. When Bruce requested clarification, James said that he found his mother Andrea and him in Hawaii at the “big pink hotel”. In fact, Bruce and Andrea had celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary in 1997 at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, which was painted pink. Five weeks later Andrea was pregnant with James. (Leininger et al., 2009)

Personal reasons for trying past-life regression include discovering identities in prior lifetimes and the challenges encountered. However, most of those who explore hypnotherapy tend to believe in reincarnation and may be biased.

Like hypnotherapy, many unconventional techniques for proving survival have not found acceptance in the academic community. These methods include channeling, mediumship, lucid dreaming, meditation, psychic abilities, transcendent experiences, mysticism, trances, Ouija boards, OBEs, seances, EVP (white noise, etc.), automatic writing, telepathy, peak experiences, etc. Scientific research methods have not provided ground-breaking discoveries in consciousness studies. After years of research and experimentation, the basic questions remain: What is consciousness? What does it do? How does it work? Where does it go?

#### Past Investigations into Survival.

 The Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was founded in 1882. Reputable individuals, well-known in British society were on its first committee. The SPR was the first organization of its kind in the world, and its mission was to investigate psychic phenomenon without prejudice and in the spirit of science. Early members included the renowned chemist Sir William Crookes, physicist Sir Oliver Lodge, Nobel laureate Charles Richet, artist Lewis Charles Powles, journalist Jane Barlow and psychologist William James.

The committee chose medium Leonora Piper, from a pool of 19,000 respondents who claimed to have psychic powers. William James “the father of modern psychology” named Piper “The White Crow” to underline her unique qualities as a medium. James staked his reputation on her psychic abilities, including her impressive demonstrations of communicating with the deceased. (Alvarado, 2002)

The SPR had detectives following Piper and her husband for months before hiring her as their first subject. The amount of time and energy that went into examining Mrs. Piper as a genuine medium was unprecedented. Many of the SPR’s most distinguished scholars were intent on exposing Mrs. Piper as a fraud. The SPR’s committee tested her constantly and subjected her to the highest standards of vigorous scrutiny. In addition to determining whether conscious fraud was involved, the researchers were interested in determining whether Piper’s results were transmitted through telepathy. (Cole, 2001)

Over the years, Piper became a celebrity among mediums, physicists, scholars, and past skeptics who truly believed Piper was William James’ white crow. Piper explained that she spoke through a “control” in the after-life named George Pelham. The explanation was that Pelham was one of the few mediums on the other side who could communicate with Piper. Pelham was the transmitter, and Piper was the receiver of Pelham’s messages for the benefit of the sitter.

In 1895, Professor William Newbold of the SPR had a sitting with Piper and her conduit George Pelham. He was particularly interested in the differences between life and the afterlife according to the deceased writer Stainton Moses:

Professor Newbold —"Does the soul carry with it into its new life all its passions and animal appetites?"

George Pelham (Leonara Piper speaking) —"Oh, no, indeed, not at all. Why, my good friend and scholar, you would have this world of ours a decidedly material one if it were so”.

Newbold — In “The Writings of Stainton Moses” you said that the soul carried with it all its passions and appetites and was very slowly purified of them.

Pelham (Piper) —"It is all untrue”.

Newbold —"And that the souls of the bad hover over the earth goading sinners on to their own destruction”.

Pelham (Piper) —"Not so. Not at all so. I claim to understand this, and it is emphatically not so. (Internet Archive, 1929)

Eventually, Stainton Moses was located in the afterlife by George Pelham, and they had a brief communication (through Piper) while Professor Newbold was in attendance:

Newbold —"You taught that evil spirits tempt sinners to their own destruction"?

Stainton Moses (Piper speaking) —"I have found out differently since I came over here. This particular statement given me by my friends as their medium when I was in the body is not true".

Newbold —"Your second statement was that the soul carries its passions and appetites with it".

S. Moses (Piper) —"Material passions. Untrue. It is not so. I believed that we had every desire after reaching this life as when in the body, but I find that we leave all such behind; in other words, evil thoughts die with the body".

While on this topic, George Pelham (speaking through Piper) cited an example from Plato to explain the differences between the earth plane and the afterlife:

George Pelham (Piper speaking): “So, our world may be compared with the cave of which Plato speaks in the Seventh Book of the Republic. This story summarizes our communications and that justifies me in briefly recalling it”.

Plato imagines prisoners who from their birth have been enchained in a dark cave in such a way that they are not able either to move or to turn their heads, and can only look straight in front of them. Behind and above the captives a great fire burns, and between the fire and the captives. Men pass back and forth carrying vessels, statues, images of animals, plants, and other objects. The shadows of these men and the objects they carry are seen upon that wall of the cave which is opposite to the captives. Remember, these captives know nothing of the external world and the shadows which they take to be reality. They spend their time discussing the shadows, naming them, and classifying them.

One of the captives is carried off and transported into the external world. At first the light dazzles him, and he can distinguish nothing. But by degrees, his sight adapts to its surroundings, and he learns to look upon the stars, moon, and the sun. When he has been brought back to the cave and sits beside his companions, he takes part in their discussions and tries to make them understand that what they take for realities are only shadows. However, the captives are confident in their lengthy reflections on the subject, so they laugh and scorn him. The same thing would happen to a soul which had dwelt for a time in the world of spirit and had been brought back into the world of matter. (Internet Archive, 1929, para. 18)

Another proposed technique for communicating with the deceased is through “automatic writing” (also known as psychography). This method supposedly allows a medium to produce written words without consciously writing. Practitioners hold a writing instrument and allow messages to come through from the deceased.

In a small book, “The Blue Island” (Stead, 1922), the sister of a confirmed drowned passenger on the Titanic, tells the story of the transition to a new realm through automatic writing. He describes the first stage after death as the ship sank:

The scene on the boat at the time of striking was not pleasant, but it was as nothing to the scene among the poor souls newly thrust out of their bodies, all unwillingly. It was both heartbreaking and repellent. And thus, we waited — waited until all were collected, until all was ready, and then we moved our scene to a different land. It was all lightness, brightness. Everything as physical and quite as material in every way as the world we had just finished with. We were being taken to the place destined for all those people who pass over suddenly — on account of its general appeal. It helps the nerve-racked newcomer to fall into line and regain mental balance very quickly. (Archive.org, 1922, para. #)

#### Recent Investigations Seeking to Prove Survival.

In a recent study by Wahbeh et al. (2023), the objective was to evaluate what types of evidence might persuade academic professionals that some aspect of consciousness survives after bodily death. The conclusion was: “Academics hold a wide range of beliefs and confidence in survival. Successful experiments designed to test for survival may influence skeptics’ prior beliefs” (Wahbeh et al., 2023, p. #).

Professor Jeffrey Schwartz at the University of Arizona has written several papers on the hypothesis of consciousness surviving death. According to Schwartz (2024 as cited in University of Arizona, 2024):

His experiments involve the collaboration of evidence-based research mediums as well as state-of-the-art optical sciences technology for potentially measuring the energy of spirit. Controlled laboratory research with evidential mediums, combined with advanced technology research, points to the primacy of consciousness and the existence of a greater spiritual reality. (para. 22)

Jeffrey Mishlove is a researcher exploring parapsychology and its implication for understanding the survival of consciousness. He was diverted in his education in the 1970s and switched his field to parapsychology. He explores afterlife investigations, NDEs, ADCs, reincarnation, instrumental trans-communication, mediumship, etc. Mishlove (as cited in New
Dimension Radio, 2024) said:

When we talk about survival after death we’re about [whether or not] consciousness is separate from the brain…To the extent that science deliberately ignores this, we are unfortunately, and sadly, and very deliberately, ignoring a very important piece of self-awareness. (para.23)

According to Wade (1998), postmortem consciousness has its roots in the termination of bodily functions, brain activity, and the nervous system. The author speaks of memory as an important factor in transitioning from life to an unknown afterlife. Wade claimed, if the brain and central nervous system are not functioning, but memory and personality survive (as during the NDE), then postmortem consciousness may be a continuing source of Being. Additionally, the author stated that the intent had been to concentrate on medical evidence during the dying process. Wade’s overall thesis suggests that consciousness exists in prenatal and postmortem states. However, the author limited the narrative to veridical memories OBEs during NDEs.

Veridical evidence (OBE) of consciousness coming from both extremes of the life span (prenatal and postmortem), which suggest that some form of the individuality can exist independently of known cellular processes associated with the body. By utilizing empirical, verifiable veridical and NDE data (OBE/NDE), consciousness has been shown to record measurable metabolic processes and brain activity until both have ceased altogether. The OBE and NDE have [distinctive ways] of suggesting that individual consciousness predates physical life at the moment of conception and survival after death. With increasing data from scientific studies, in both prenatal and postmortem states, some form of mind is present and functioning when the brain is not. New research is providing verifiable evidence that consciousness transcends the physical limitations of the body. Accordingly, prenatal and near-death awareness share common characteristics. (Wade, 98)

Interestingly, Wade (1998) pointed out the Platonic origins of birth-death cycles and stated that new research supported correspondences between being born and dying. The author theorized that a transcendent source of consciousness exists before birth and after death. Wade noticed to what extent these two states of consciousness resemble each other.

Eminent medical researchers, including Penfield and John Eccles (1989), incline to support an idea whose origins go back to Platonic thought. Evidence for a physically transcendent source of consciousness comes from the extremes of the life span when neurological processes are demonstrably immature, and after death, when the brain has ceased to measure activity. Increasing evidence indicates that, in both prenatal and postmortem states, some form of mind is present and functioning when the brain is not. These independent bodies of research provide verifiable evidence of consciousness that transcends the physical limitations of the body as we know it. Moreover, prenatal and near-death awareness share common characteristics. (Wade, 1998, p. 42)

Another theory attempting to establish a case for survival is “After-Death Communication” (ADC). An ADC is a subjective experience that occurs when a deceased family member or friend directly contacts someone. An ADC is a direct experience, so psychics, mediums, therapists, rituals, or devices are not involved. Researchers of ADCs theorized that our deceased loved ones choose how, when, and where, they plan to make contact. According to Guggenheim (2019), “Some people state they hear audible voices of the deceased that are the same as when those persons were alive. A large percentage of the messages received are brief and to the point, like telegrams of 25 words or less” (p. 10).

The most frequent messages expressed verbally or non-verbally by those who have made their transition include: “I’m okay … I’m fine … Everything is okay … Don’t worry about me … Don’t grieve for me … I’m happy … Everything will be alright … Go on with your life … Please forgive me … Thank you for taking care of me … I’ll always be there for you … I’m watching over you … I love you”.

ADC experiences provide anecdotal evidence when unknown information is given. Friends and family may be told the location of valuable items that they did not know existed. Usually, the purported (2019) cited the reasons for these visits by the deceased is to offer comfort, reassurance, and hope. Gugenheim postulates, “They want you to know they’re still alive, and you’ll be reunited with them when you pass over. They want to assure you that they will be there to meet you as you make your own transition.” (Guggenheim, 2019, p. 12)

# Conclusion

Throughout history, people of all cultures have believed in some sort of afterlife. Recent surveys show that 60% to 70% of adults in the United States believe in life after death. As discussed, there is a lack of scientific data on survival of consciousness after the NDE. However, common elements found in NDE narratives provide a glimpse of what may happen immediately after death. In such cases, it appears that consciousness survives for a brief time. However, the NDE is only a promising clue for proving life after death. The NDE does not provide a sufficient answer as to whether consciousness survives for more than a few minutes.

Beyond the NDE, Nature’s design for the processes of life and death corresponds to Heraclitus’ Unity of Opposites. In this systematic manner, consciousness survives death and eventually, returns to life during pre-conception. In Greek philosophy, there are significant differences between Plato’s Transmigration of Souls and the Eastern teachings of reincarnation. Plato’s theory is a personal experience. It does not end with becoming one with an Infinite Source or for seeking the highest knowledge for expansion of consciousness. However, transmigration and reincarnation find common ground on the existence of four levels of reality.

Past and present scientific investigations for proving survival began with the SPR. At the present time, the Institute of Noetic Sciences, universities, independent researchers, and scientific studies are actively pursuing credible evidence of survival. The methods used included: hypnotic regression, channeling, automatic writing, after-death communications, childhood memories of past lives, near-death experiences, veridical perception, pre-natal monitoring, and neuroscience brain testing.

The biological process of pre-conception to birth is fully understood by medical science. The problem is, no one knows how this process originally came to be. The most important issue, is the question of whether patterns of birth and death stem from the mysteries of Nature. Since embedded within Nature is the recurring adaptations for living and dying on four levels, it appears that consciousness follows Nature’s predetermined path.

Consciousness is Nature’s animating, vivifying energy of the life-force. Logically, it evolved through an automatic, mechanical, metaphysical design that continues from birth-to-death. Regeneration of consciousness is necessary before returning to earth with renewed energy for a new life.

By analyzing Nature’s process during pregnancy, we find a symmetry with the processes of birth and death. In both cases, corresponding models appear: (a) the fetus and the ethereal body are both released from their former worlds of water and air respectively, (b) the fetus moves through the tunnel of the birth canal as NDEers report moving through a tunnel in an ethereal body, and (c) at the end of the birth canal and NDE tunnel, the newborn and the ethereal body are in the presence of a new and different light. There is a philosophical foundation to support the claim that Nature’s design of the birth model is symmetrical to a proposed death model. If this philosophical logic holds true, consciousness does survive after death according the Theory of Correspondences.

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