

Essay

The Theory of a Natural Afterlife: An Overview

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Abstract

This overview of the theory of a natural afterlife gives a scientifically plausible, logically consistent answer to the age-old question of “Where is heaven?” and may change forever how you view death. It abbreviates a more comprehensive and in-depth paper entitled “The Theory of a Natural Afterlife: A Newfound, Real Possibility for What Awaits Us at Death.”¹ As the natural afterlife is all relative to what’s in the mind of a dying person, it is best described and imagined here in terms of you, the dying person.

Keywords: Afterlife; natural afterlife; human mortality; death and dying; near-death experience; imperceptible death.

1. Introduction

You’re dying having what will be called your near-death experience (NDE) should you recover. Within this very intense, “even more real than real”² dreamlike experience[†], you believe you’re in heaven. You’re overcome by marvelous feelings of wonder, love, and contentment and excited about such a glorious eternity. With death and the end of consciousness, this is your *never-ending experience (NEE)* and *natural afterlife*. At least, so posits the *theory of a natural afterlife*.

But how is such a natural afterlife, based on an NEE, possible when presumably any dreamlike experience ends with death and a non-functioning brain? Ironically, it’s possible not because individual consciousness continues after death but because with death, when *and if* such consciousness ends, you won’t know that:

- You’ve died. You won’t see the “NDE screen” go blank.
- Your NDE has ended. You won’t notice that nothing more happens in your NDE.
- An eternity is fleeting by. Is this happening just before or after you died? You can’t tell. *Relative to you*, it’s irrelevant, time is suspended, and your NDE is essentially everlasting.

The situation is like watching an extremely exhilarating movie and not knowing that: you’ve unbelievably, with no perceivable drowsiness, fallen asleep; for you the movie is suspended; and time is fleeting by. Until you wake up, you still believe you’re captivated in that movie.

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† Here NDEs are not differentiated from near-death dreams as only the dreamlike aspects and the very intense reality of NDEs are relevant to the theory of a natural afterlife.

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2. Understanding and Appreciation

The natural afterlife is hard to understand, even harder to appreciate. To grasp it, you must be able to imagine what it's like to never wake up from a dream, something you've never experienced. You must imagine not knowing in your dreamlike NDE that it has ended, thus believing it hasn't, despite knowing now that it will. And, you must imagine the relative irrelevancy of billions of years rushing by in what for you is a timeless, everlasting, final NDE moment.

Why won't you know that your NDE has ended? Because you almost certainly won't perceive your moment of death (just as you never perceive the moment you fall asleep). And why does your final NDE moment become timeless and everlasting? Because with an *imperceptible death* (as with falling asleep) your perception of time simply ends because perceived events (here NDE events)—whose sequence defines our *event relative time*—imperceptibly cease. There is no more time then to experience anything else, not even nothingness. Thus, your final NDE moment—an essentially “paused” NDE, which includes (as within any dream) your sense of self—is now your forever present moment resulting in your NEE and natural afterlife as shown in Fig. 1.

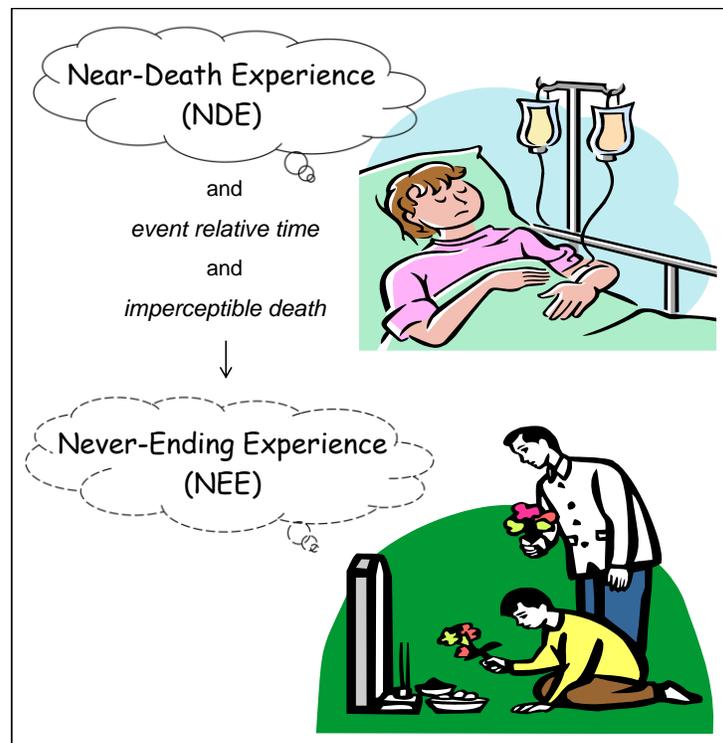


Fig. 1. An NDE, an event relative time perception, and an imperceptible death result in an NEE and natural afterlife. Others know you've died, but you don't. Instead, you're suspended within a dreamlike NEE. Clip Art from Microsoft Office.com

To appreciate such a timeless afterlife, you must be able to envision and value being left at death in a static, dreamlike yet intensely real-like state of mind enjoying an everlasting, ideally

heavenly moment—one heightened by a never-ending anticipation of many more such moments to come. For some, this vision must replace the traditional vision of spending an eternity of human time in a time-perceptive, perfect world. Actually, such a world isn't logical since perfection implies no challenges, no free-will lest decisions be bad (even evil), and thus an eternity of boredom. Certainly, not perfect! A timeless afterlife on the other hand has no such inconsistencies as one can logically experience a relatively forever, perfect moment—in reality, the optimal heaven.

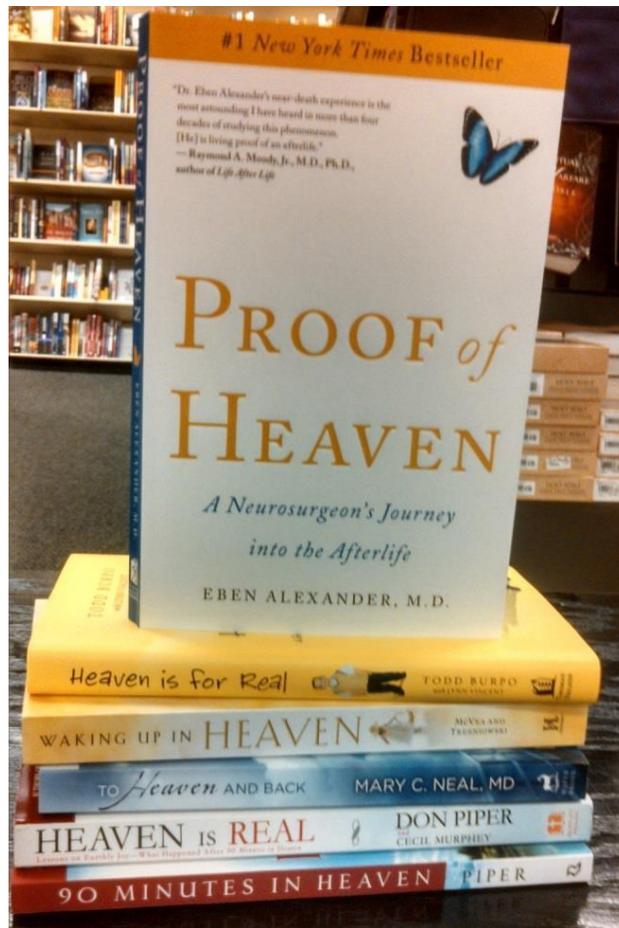


Fig. 2. Books claiming NDEs as proof of heaven. NDEs provide no proof of heaven but do provide evidence for the natural afterlife.

3. Significance

The natural afterlife differs from the supernatural afterlife or the nothingness that for centuries were considered the only possibilities for what one experiences after death. For example, the natural afterlife wasn't considered by the authors of many bestselling books each claiming, based on a personal NDE, that consciousness survives death—e.g., *Proof of Heaven* by Dr. Eben Alexander³. See Fig. 2. Nor was it considered by the authors of many scientific articles each

claiming that NDEs provide no evidence of an afterlife since they're induced by the natural physiology of the brain shutting down—e.g., “The Death of “Near Death”: Even If Heaven Is Real, You Aren't Seeing It” by Kyle Hill.⁴ See Fig. 3. Actually, NDEs, while providing no *proof* of an afterlife, provide *evidence* for the natural afterlife as does the science attempting to explain them.

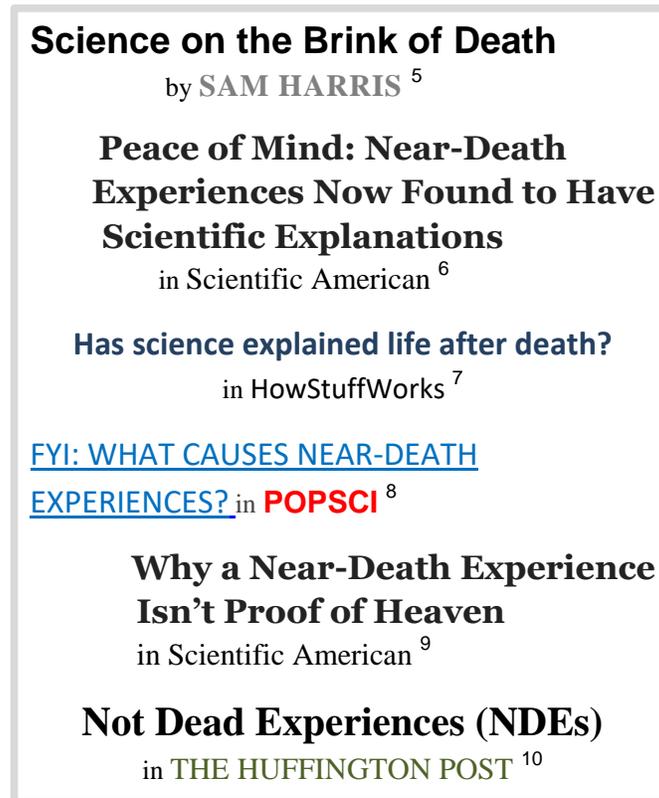


Fig. 3. Popular science articles on NDEs. The science that refutes the claim that NDEs provide proof of a supernatural afterlife provides evidence of the brain's propensity to create a natural one.

Evidence for the natural afterlife, however, doesn't guarantee that *you* will have one, that it will be heavenly, or that it's the only one possible. You may not have an NDE, in which case your afterlife may be just like your before-life. Or, your NEE may be of a perfectly marvelous day on the beach, which for you may be the ideal heaven. Or, unfortunately, your NEE may be a hellish nightmare. Up to 15% of NDEs are such by one estimate.¹¹ Also, your NEE could be overridden by a supernatural afterlife at death or sometime thereafter. The theory of a natural afterlife doesn't preclude this.

It merely defines a new, very plausible after-life alternative, whose possibility can impact how one views death (and life), which is its main significance.

4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, your natural afterlife could simply be described as dying while believing you're in heaven (or hell) and for all eternity never knowing otherwise.

The following features make this afterlife extraordinary.

- It's supported by science—i.e., requires no supernatural beliefs.
- It doesn't suffer from logical inconsistencies.
- It was apparently never part of the discussion before being identified by a 2013 article¹².
- It's a gift of nature, perhaps from a God, resulting from our amazing ability to have a dreamlike NDE and perhaps our brain's propensity to induce one, our event relative perception of time, and our nearly certain imperceptible death.
- It can be seen as acceptable to both theists and atheists and doesn't preclude a supernatural afterlife if some type of consciousness continues or emerges sometime after death.
- Its content is mysteriously produced and personalized, either by nature or by a God as you may choose to believe.

The difficulties in understanding and appreciating the natural afterlife also make explaining it difficult. You can find more detailed explanations and discussion in the paper that is identified in the abstract and referenced below.

References

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(This paper provides a comprehensive, in-depth, and scholarly discourse on the natural afterlife, including a near proof of its existence.)
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(This is the first article ever written on the theory of a natural afterlife. It gives a more religious and philosophical perspective on the theory, arguing for its plausibility both philosophically and scientifically.)