under the influence of LSD often relive aspects of the birth process (Grof and Halifax, 1977). The contention--quite plausible, especially in the light of Penfield's (1975) work on the neuro-electrical activation of memories--is that under special circumstances we may re-experience the agony of expulsion from the amniotic sac of "oceanic bliss" into the world of individual existence. For Grof these traumatic birth memories have important therapeutic implications. He is not, however, a Freudian reductionist; on the contrary, he has used nonspecific chemical amplifiers of consciousness to enrich and enlarge the cartography of inner space.

Based on Grof's observations, the astronomer Carl Sagan (1979) suggests an intriguing explanation of near-death experiences in his popular tour of the wonderland of modern science, Broca's Brain. He poses the problem effectively: "How could it be that people of all ages, cultures and eschatological predispositions have the same sort of near-death experience?" (p. 302). Sagan speculates that the basis of near-death and mystical experiences is somehow "wired-in" (note the characteristic mechanical type of metaphor) to the physiology of the human organism, and that drugs or other types of mechanism might trigger and thus reactivate these experiences in the form of vivid hallucinations. Out-of-body experiences would be affective replays of ejection from the womb at birth. The tunnel effect reported so frequently in NDEs might represent a flashback to the process of exiting through the "tunnel" of the vagina. (It might, of course, as well be seen as the psychic equivalent of the process of exiting from the present dying body.) Sagan writes:

> . . . every human being, without exception, has already shared an experience like that of those travellers who return from the land of death: the sensation of flight, the emergence from darkness to light; an experience in which, at least sometimes, a heroic figure can be dimly perceived, bathed in radiance and glory. There is only one common experience that matches this description. It is called birth (p.304).

Sagan calls attention in this quotation to three important ideas. One is that we seem to be dealing with a basic mechanism of psychophysiology. The second is that there is a fundamental analogy between the birth process and the death process. And third is that NDEs and mystical experiences are somehow structurally related.

However, the difficulty arises in seeing the NDE as nothing but an illusory psychophysiological reflex. At least we would require some evidence in support of the hypothesis; for instance, if Sagan is right, then people who had bad births--difficulties in the process of exiting through the birth canal, etc.--should not have benign near-death experiences. (And would those who come into the world by way of Caesarean section be immune to NDEs?) Yet even if such connections were established, nothing would follow concerning the "reality" of near-death episodes. Other factors need to be taken into consideration, such as the occurrence of veridical psi components. Further, the essential structures of birth and death experiences differ in this way: birth moves from "amniotic bliss" to expulsion into the traumatic light. The pattern in the near-death process

is the reverse: we begin with the pain and shock of the dying process, and then proceed to experience a light which, however, is uniformly said to be warm, loving, and gentle. If the near-death experience is a flashback and replica of the birth experience, why this inconsistency? The forms of the two processes are not analogous, as we would expect if one were a flashback of the other. They seem in fact to be the reverse of each other: being born into this world is painful and dying out of it seems to be pleasant. It is clear that we are not yet any closer to an adequate explanation of near-death experiences.

A Nonreductionistic Jungian Approach to Near-Death Experiences

Grof, from whom Sagan borrowed to formulate his hypothesis about NDEs, is a phenomenologist with Jungian leanings. Data emerging from psychedelic research led him to validate Jung's concept of archetypes and their relation to the stream of our personal consciousness. Grof, like Jung, was clearly not disposed to reducing them to mere physiological epiphenomena. I would like to propose a possible Jungian explanation of near-death experiences. At the same time, I believe that this approach will have to be supplemented by findings from parapsychology.

The Archetypes of Death

I shall make use of two assumptions from the field of Jungian analytical psychology. The first assumption is that certain collective psychic structures--forms, ideas, archetypes, empirically substantiated by data from dreams and mythology--in some logically prior way exist, free from the limits of space and time. The

archetypes represent the point of intersection between personal time and timeless transpersonal being. Jung (1968) himself put it this way:

> The deepest we can reach in our exploration of the unconscious mind is the layer where man is no longer a distinct individual, but where his mind widens out and merges into the mind of mankind--not the conscious mind, but the unconscious mind of mankind, where we are all the same (p. 46).

The second assumption is that the archetypes function to assist the growth and evolution of the personality. Jung calls this process "individuation." The archetypes come into play especially during mental emergencies, as automatic responses to crises of individuation. Jung (1971, p. 38) also stresses what he calls archetypes of transformation, which ~~are not exclusively personalities but~~ involve "typical situations, places, ways and means, that symbolize the kind of transformation in question." One other immediately relevant thing to note is the ineffable, paradoxical, and numinous nature of the archetypes.

Research on near-death experiences may be uncovering data which empirically support the hypothesis of an "Idea" or "Archetype of Death"--a collective psychic structure whose function is to assist a human personality during a major crisis of individuation. According to Jungian theory, such an archetype would represent and contain the racial memory and wisdom of mankind. The collective experience of the human race has come up with this as the best possible way to die. The archetype is a paradigm--an old Platonic term--for how to die.

It is optimally functional for dying in the same way the lung through evolution has become optimally functional for breating. Near-death phenomena point toward an archetype or paradigm for a healthy death--a somewhat paradoxical expression, I admit.

The advantage of this explanation is that it saves the important subjective phenomena: the experience of ineffable unity, transcendental elation, and so forth. For, as Jung claims, the archetypes are merging phenomena with numinous overtones. It also accounts for the transformative effects of NDEs, which seem to involve release from the limitations of ordinary, space-time bound, individual existence. Yet there remain two thorny problems for the hypothesis of a death archetype. First, what is the fate of personal consciousness in this archetypal transformation of death? Second, what are we to make of the psi components of NDEs? The genuine paranormal effects obviously occur in a specifiable space-time framework and seem to involve awareness of particular deceased individuals.

According to the theory of archetypes, superpersonal structures "survive" death partly because they never undergo birth the way individual bodies do. Before John Jones was, the archetypes are. But what happens (in this Platonic-Jungian atemporal world) to the personal consciousness of John Jones? Some of the testimony from near-death cases indicates that the unique personality survives, for what the experients often claim they "see" are apparitions of recognizable, unique beings. Of course, this is not all; other things are also "seen," sensed as amorphous presences, or otherwise "perceived" as mythic forms. In the world glimpsed by dying patients, personal

and transpersonal elements apparently co-exist. The near-death experience, like the Jungian archetype, is full of paradox. It strains the limits of our normal conceptual apparatus, as if it would in some way both unite and dissolve opposites.

The facts seem to support a paradoxical explanation of the fate of the individual. The description from Noyes and Kletti (1976) that I quoted above bears repeating: ". . . I was no longer me as I had once known myself. I had a feeling of becoming part of a greater whole." This speaks of a transformation of personal identity. There are different ways of describing this fundamental experience. Some call it the highest quest of the mystic, others regression to the magical omnipotence of primary narcissism. How shall we decide which interpretation to place upon this basic phenomenon of transcendence? This brings us once again to the paranormal factor in NDEs.

The Psi Component

The reductionist has neat and coherent schemes for digesting the dreams of artists and the visions of mystics and dying persons. But it is no easy matter for them to swallow such puzzling fish as ESP and PK. It is the psi component in near-death experiences that stands squarely in the way of reducing them to being mere illusions.

But having said this, we must also consider the explanation offered by parapsychological reductionists. They would claim that if we combine the known paranormal powers of embodied minds with a basically Freudian metaphysics, we can account for the near-death phenomena and still reject the survival hypothesis. Suppose a dying

patient experiences a veridical apparition of a relative who died before the patient was born, precognizes in detail some unusual future event, or provides a verifiable report of being out of the body. Why, these parapsychologists ask, can't we say that this is merely an example of the patient's psi operating in the service of a regressive tendency toward wish-fulfillment? In fact, there is hardly anything, no matter how remote from "ordinary" reality, that they do not ascribe to the supposed infinite psi-potential of the living human being. This "super-ESP" hypothesis (Gauld, 1961), as it is called, has been aptly characterized by Osis (1979) as "that strange invention which shies like a mouse from being tested in the laboratory but, in rampant speculations, acts like a ferocious lion devouring the survival evidence" (p. 31).

Moreover, however, as other parapsychologists have argued, if such extraordinary paranormal abilities exist in human beings, then it seems plausible to take the next step and consider the possibility of survival. In short, the super-ESP hypothesis is self-canceling, for the more effectively it argues for fantastic powers of the living mind, the less implausible--in fact, the more probable--it seems that there is an element of human personality capable of surviving after death.

The Survival Hypothesis

The immediate attraction of the survival hypothesis is its consistency with the beliefs of almost all those who have had the classic near-death experience. Ring (1980), for example, found a "huge effect" here. Although those having the experience were found to be less inclined to believe in survival to start with, as com-

pared to non-experiencers, they were much more likely to believe in it afterwards. Thus, as Ring points out, it is not merely "coming close to death that tends to convince one that there is life after death; it is. . .the experience itself that proves decisive. The testimony here is unambiguous" (p.169). Of course, since the claims of these experients, particularly those about the nature of the after-world, are not publicly verifiable, we cannot consider them as direct evidence for survival. But a mass of such accounts with congruent claims must, after a critical point, begin to count as a special consensus. Is it possible that those who come closer to experiencing death know by acquaintance more about death than the rest of us do?

Needless to say, this will not do for the skeptic. Belief in life after death is unpopular among most intellectuals today. One reason for this is that there are supposedly good a priori arguments against the conceivability of survival. An excellent discussion of this problem from a philosophical point of view is offered by H. D. Lewis (1978) in Persons and Life After Death. The prevailing conception of the person nowadays derives from physicalism, the ruling philosophy that sees everything mental as ultimately reducible to physical states. Yet the major tendency of parapsychological research is to upset the pretensions of physicalism. Indeed, some able persons have argued the case for the impossibility of reducing psi phenomena to physical principles (see, e.g., Beloff, 1980). This is a problem that requires full discussion. I will only remark here that the more unlikely it becomes that psi can be explained in terms of physical principles, the more intrinsically plausible the survival hypothesis becomes.

An evaluation of the survivalist explanation of near-death phenomena demands a full account of other types of evidence for survival, such as mediumistic communications, veridical apparitions of the deceased, and reincarnation memories. Explaining NDEs is obviously a large undertaking. The most that can be said now is that they cannot be adequately accounted for by any of the reductionist theories, but that to invoke either Jungian or outright survival hypotheses would be premature. To embrace such non-reductionistic explanations is to commit oneself to far-reaching revisions of the general nature of things. One desires more solid ground from which to make such transcendental leaps. In the light of the facts, one is entitled to abstain from final judgment and rest in the skeptical attitude--but this means with regard to the pronouncements of physicalism as well as to the claims of survivalists. One is rendered free--in a Jamesian, pragmatic way--to accept the survival hypothesis, for such a belief is consistent with near-death phenomena. But the great question of who we are and what our fate is after death is still open. We may be on the threshold of new discoveries. Whether we advance or whether we stagnate in indifference will depend on the courage and collaboration of many, both hard-headed scientists and students of the humanities.

References

Audette, J. R. Denver cardiologist discloses findings after 18 years of near-death research. Anabiosis, 1979, 1, 1-2.

Audette, J. R. Historical perspectives on near-death episodes and experiences. In C. Lundahl (Ed.), A Collection of Near-Death Research Readings. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, in press.

Barrett, W. F. Death-Bed Visions. London: Methuen, 1926.

Beloff, J. Could there be a physical explanation for psi? Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 1980, 50, 263-272.

Bozzano, E. Apparitions of deceased persons at death-beds. The Annals of Psychical Science, 1906, 67—100.

Bozzano, E. Phénomènes Psychiques au Moment de la Mort. Paris: Nicholas Renault, 1923.

Bozzano, E. De Fenomeni di Telecinesia in Rapporto con Eventi di Morte. Verona: Casa Editrice Europa, 1948.

Crookall, R. Intimations of Immortality. Exeter, England: James Clarke, 1965.

Ehrenwald, J. The ESP Experience. New York: Basic Books, 1978.

Elliot, F. A. Clinical Neurology. Philadelphia and London: Saunders, 1966.

Evans-Wentz, W. Y. (Ed.). The Tibetan Book of the Dead. (3rd ed.) London: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Gauld, A. The "super-ESP" hypothesis. Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, 1961, 53, 226-246.

Grof, S., and Halifax, J. The Human Encounter with Death. New York: Dutton, 1977.

Grosso, M. Near-death experience and the Eleusinian mysteries. Paper

presented at Founder's Day, Psychical Research Foundation, April, 1979.

Honorton, C. Psi and internal attention states. In B. B. Wolman (Ed.), Handbook of Parapsychology. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977.

Hyslop, J. H. Psychical Research and the Resurrection. Boston: Small, Maynard, 1908.

Jung, C. G. Analytical Psychology: Its Theory and Practice. New York: Random House, 1968.

Jung, C. G. The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Kornfeld, D. S., and Zimberg, S. Psychiatric complications of open-heart surgery. New England Journal of Medicine, 1965, 273, 287-292.

Laing, R. D. The Divided Self. Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1965.

Lewis, H. D. Persons and Life After Death. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

Lundahl, C. (Ed.). A Collection of Near-Death Research Readings. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, in press.

McHarg, J. F. Review of At the Hour of Death, by K. Osis and E. Haraldsson. Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 1978, 49, 885-887; see also 1979, 50, 128-129, for further discussion.

Moody, R. A., Jr. Life After Life. Atlanta: Mockingbird Books, 1975.

Moody, R. A., Jr. Reflections on Life After Life. New York: Bantam Books, 1977.

Noyes, R. Dying and mystical consciousness. Journal of Thanatology, 1971, 1, 25-41.

Noyes, R., and Kletti, R. Depersonalization in the face of life-

threatening danger: A description. Psychiatry, 1976, 39, 19-27.

Osis, K. Deathbed Observations by Physicians and Nurses. New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1961.

Osis, K. Research on near-death experiences: A new look. In W. G. Roll (Ed.), Research in Parapsychology 1978. Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1979.

Osis, K., and Haraldsson, E. Deathbed observations by physicians and nurses: A cross-cultural survey. Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, 1977, 71, 237-259. (a)

Osis, K., and Haraldsson, E. At the Hour of Death. New York: Avon Books, 1977. (b)

Osis, K., and Haraldsson, E. Correspondence: Reply to Dr. Palmer. Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, 1978, 72, 395-400.

Osis, K., and Haraldsson, E. Correspondence: Reply to Dr. McHarg. Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 1979, 50, 126-128.

Osis, K., and McCormack, D. Insiders' view of the OBE. ASPR Newsletter, 1978, 4, 18-19.

Palmer, J. Correspondence: Deathbed apparitions and the survival hypothesis. Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, 1978, 72, 392-395; see also 1979, 73, 94-96, for further discussion.

Penfield, W. The Mystery of the Mind. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Rank, O. The Double. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971.

Reiser, M., and Bakst, H. Psychodynamic problems of the patient with

structural heart disease. In American Handbook of Psychiatry. (Vol. 4.) New York: Basic Books, 1975.

Rhine, L. E. Mind Over Matter. New York: Macmillan, 1970.

King, K. Life at Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980.

Rogo, S. Research on deathbed experiences: Some contemporary and historical perspectives. Journal of the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, 1979, 2, 37-49.

Russell, G. W. The Candle of Vision. Wheaton, Ill.: Quest, 1965.

Sabom, M. B. Near-death experiences: A medical perspective. Paper presented at Founder's Day, Psychical Research Foundation, May, 1980.

Sabom, M. B., and Kreutziger, S. A. Physicians evaluate the near-death experience. Theta, 1978, 6 (No. 4), 1-6.

Sagan, C. Broca's Brain. New York: Random House, 1979.

Sidgwick, H., and Committee. Report on the census of hallucinations. Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, 1894, 10, 25-422.

Department of Philosophy and Religion
Jersey City State College
2039 Kennedy Memorial Boulevard
Jersey City, N. J. 07305