Schedule

Thursday, April 26, 2012

7:30 am–8:30 am  REGISTRATION & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

8:30 am–8:45 am  Welcome and Forum Introduction – William Linton

Session One: Research on Near Death Experiences
8:45 am–9:50 am  Non-Local Consciousness: An Explanatory Model for the Near-Death Experience – Pim van Lommel, M.D.
9:50 am–10:55 am  Research on Near Death Experiences (NDE) The Findings and a Case from an Intensive Care Prospective Study - Penny Sartori, Ph.D.

10:55 am–11:15 am  BREAK

11:15 am–12:00 pm  A Conversation with Eben Alexander III, M.D. – Near Death Experiences  Interviewer: Steve Paulson

12:00 pm–1:00 pm  LUNCH

Session Two: Extending the NDE Conversation
1:00 pm–2:05 pm  Shared Death Experiences: An Analysis of Characteristics and Implications – Raymond Moody, M.D., Ph.D.
2:05 pm–3:10 pm  A New Philosophy of Physics, NDEs and Life After Death – Eric Weiss, Ph.D.
3:10 pm–3:30 pm  BREAK

3:30 pm–4:30 pm  Panel Discussion: Penny Sartori, Pim van Lommel, Raymond Moody & Eric Weiss. Moderator: Steve Paulson

4:30 pm–5:15 pm  RECEPTION

6:30 pm–8:00 pm  Hosted Dinner Conversations

Friday, April 27, 2012

7:30 am–8:30 am  REGISTRATION & CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

8:30 am–8:40 am  Day Two Overview – William Linton

Session Three: Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness
8:40 am–9:45 am  The Experience of Death and Dying Psychological, Philosophical and Spiritual Dimensions - Stanislav Grof, M.D., Ph.D.
9:45 am–10:50 am  Understanding Death: Implications of Mystical States of Consciousness Occasioned by Entheogens - William A. Richards, Ph.D.

10:50 am–11:10 am  BREAK

11:10 am–12:15 pm  Training to Become a Psychedelic Psychotherapist - Jeffrey Guss, M.D.

12:15 pm–1:30 pm  LUNCH

Summary Reflections
1:30 pm–2:35 pm  Death Makes Life Possible: Exploring Cosmologies of Dying and Beyond - Marilyn Schlitz, Ph.D.
2:35 pm–2:55 pm  BREAK


3:55 pm–4:15 pm  Sound Meditation - Alexandre Tannous

4:15 pm–4:30 pm  Closing Meditation – Peter Russell

4:30 pm–5:00 pm  DESSERT RECEPTION

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- Arbor House: An Environmental Inn
- Center for Investigating Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Center for Spirituality & Healing, University of Minnesota
- International Association for Near-Death Studies
- Wisconsin Council of Churches

Final Passages: Research on Near Death & the Experience of Dying

Madison, WI
April 26–27, 2012

www.btc.org

Presenters

Eben Alexander III, M.D.
Neurosurgeon, Near-Death Experience, Research Director for the Monroe Institute, Faber, Virginia

Stasnaslav Grof, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology, Department of Philosophy, Cosmology and Consciousness, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA

Jeffrey Guss, M.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, New York University School of Medicine, New York, NY

William Linton, CEO
Promega Corporation

Raymond Moody, M.D., Ph.D.
Author, Scholar, Researcher, Lecturer, Instructor, Advisor and Counselor, Anniston, AL

Steve Paulson
Executive Producer, To The Best of Our Knowledge, Wisconsin Public Radio and Public Radio International, Madison, WI (MODERATOR)

William A. Richards, Ph.D.
Psychologist, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore, MD

Peter Russell
Fellow, Institute of Noetic Sciences, The World Business Academy and The Findhorn Foundation (CLOSING MEDITATION)

Penny Sartori, Ph.D.
Nurse and Medical Researcher, The Intensive Therapy Unit, Morriston Hospital, Swansea, Wales, UK

Manfrin Schneitz, Ph.D.
President and CEO, Institute of Noetic Sciences, Petaluma, CA

Alexandre Tannous
Musician, Educator, Composer, and Ethnomusicologist, New York, NY (SOUND MEDITATION)

Pim van Lommel, M.D.
Cardiologist, Department of Cardiology, Rijnstate Hospital; NDE Researcher and Author, Arnhem, The Netherlands

Eric Weiss, Ph.D.
Psychotherapist, Adjunct Professor, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA and Sophia Center of Holy Names College, Oakland, CA; Distinguished Scholar, Esalen Center for Theory and Research, Big Sur, CA
Final Passages...

Designed for the general public, the Bioethics Forum focuses on the sharing of scientific research and the consideration of related social and ethical issues. Many questions related to near death experiences (NDE), dying, and consciousness will be addressed by global experts, including:

- What is a near death experience (NDE)?
- What has scientific research revealed about NDEs? Are the phenomena associated with NDEs caused simply by chemical activity in the brain — or is something more going on?
- What do NDEs suggest about the possibility of consciousness continuing after death?
- What do we know about the experience of dying? How is this knowledge shaped by different cultural and spiritual contexts?
- What is a ‘good death’?
- How does the study and exploration of mystical experiences and altered states of consciousness contribute to our understanding of death and dying?
- How do interpretations of NDEs and the experience of death inform life choices? How can a heightened awareness of death lead to a more fulfilling life?
- How do life choices influence NDEs and the experience of death?

Abstracts (in order of presentation)

Nonlocal Consciousness: An Explanatory Model for the Near-Death Experience
Pim van Lommel, M.D.

Since the publication of several prospective studies on near-death experiences (NDE) in survivors of cardiac arrest, with strikingly similar results and conclusions, the NDE can no longer be scientifically ignored. It is an authentic experience which cannot be too restricted for a proper understanding of this phenomenon. One has to come to the inevitable conclusion that consciousness cannot be localised in a special time or place (nonlocality), and there are good reasons to assume that our consciousness does not always coincide with the functioning of our brain. So research on NDE seems to be a source of new insights into the possibility of a continuity of our consciousness after physical death.

A New Philosophy of Physics, NDEs and Life After Death
Eric Weiss, Ph.D.

Once we face the evidence, and admit that there are NDEs and life after death, we immediately find ourselves in conflict with the materialistic reductionism that — despite the developments in Relativity theory and Quantum physics which underpin it — continues to dominate our understanding of reality in our civilization. This lecture will outline a new way of understanding reality which is entirely in accord with post-modern physics and in which NDEs and life after death become explicable.

Train to Become a Psychedelic Psychotherapist
Jeffrey Guss, M.D.

Dr. Guss is a Co-Principal Investigator and the Director of Psychedelic Psychotherapy Training for the New York University-based study of “Psilocybin-Assisted Palliative Care Treatment of Cancer-Related Existential Anxiety.” In his talk, he will review the history of this unique Training Program and the academic, ethical and research issues that have emerged over the first five years of its existence. Dr. Guss will describe the curriculum of the program and its similarities to psychoanalytic training and shared practice of NDEs can no longer be considered as ‘real’, based on the experiences of our study therapists in working with subjects. He will address the uneasy bridges that span from positivist, academic narrative, which underlie the pharmacology research model, to the more subjective, experiential based forms of knowing and healing that tend to be more sensitive to social and immanent forces.

Exploring Cosmologies of Dying and Beyond
Marilyn Schlitz, Ph.D.

How do interpretations of NDEs and the experience of death inform life choices? How can a heightened awareness of death lead to a more fulfilling life?

A Conversation with Eben Alexander III, M.D. — Near Death Experience
Eben Alexander III, M.D. (Interviewed by Steve Paulson)

Dr. Eben Alexander III has been an academic neurosurgeon for the last 25 years, including 15 years at the Bingham & Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston. Over those years he has personally dealt with hundreds of patients suffering from severe alterations in their level of consciousness. In the predawn hours of November 10, 2008, he became a comatose patient himself. His story offers a crucial key to the understanding of reality and human consciousness. In analyzing his experience, including the scientific possibilities and grand implications, he envisions a more complete reconciliation of modern science and spirituality as a natural product.

An Explanatory Model for the Near-Death Experience
Penny Sartori, Ph.D.

The presentation describes the findings of the five year prospective study carried out at a Welsh Intensive Therapy Unit where Dr. Sartori worked as a staff nurse for 17 years. There will be discussion of the case of Patient 10 who reported an accurate Out-of-Body Experience (OBE) followed by other components of the NDE and its after effects, including the inexplicable healing of a congenital abnormality. It also contrasts the accurate OBE reported by Patient 10 with the inaccurate guesses of the control group patients who had been resuscitated, but did not report an OBE and were asked to re-enact their resuscitations. Cases of reported hallucinations are compared to the NDEs and differences are highlighted.

Understanding Death Implications of Mystical States of Consciousness Occasioned by Entheogens
William A. Richards, Ph.D.

Following an orientation to the study of mystical and archetypal experiences in relation to the terminal phase of life and the encounter with death, Dr. Richards will reflect upon phenomenological data from his participation in clinical research with entheogens and human volunteers between 1963 and the present. He will define and describe the mystical and archetypal states of consciousness reported and illustrate their apparent direct impact on the lives of research volunteers and their indirect influence on the lives of family members. The validity of the intuitive conviction often reported regarding the reality of an eternal world and the indistructibility of consciousness will be considered along with reflection on philosophical assumptions, and on the limitations of the categories of human cognition and language as we attempt to assimilate this information on the frontiers of scientific knowledge. Ethical implications of these experiences also will be considered with attention to the “fear of not fearing death” in our culture.

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