

Beyond Death: Different Spiritual Perspectives on the Outward Journey

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My aim is to present something from the **spiritual perspective** on what may be happening in the Near Death Experience, and possibly in the life beyond. **My approach** is to do something which navigators at sea did before the days of global positioning; namely, triangulation. By taking bearings from different points on shore, you could approximate within a small triangle, where you were in the broad expanse of sea, where there are no discernable markers.

By taking our bearings from neuroscience, spirituality, and personal experience, we can better approximate what may be happening in that area of experience, where there are no definable certainties.

It is good to have the opportunity to have space for a **dialogue** between these different perspectives, to try to find what differences and common ground we may have found in the study of that experience, which all of us some day will have to travel ourselves.

The study of theology and spiritual experience has looked for centuries at what may happen at the close of this chapter of our existence and the beginning of the next, not only in terms of what the experience may be, but also what chosen **attitudes** those on that journey might take, which may help or hinder the experience.

In short, what you may expect from this presentation would be some reflections from a spiritual midwife, who has assisted in the delivery of those who are going into the next plane of existence, with some theoretical underpinning, mostly from the Christian experience.

I would also like to say, that I have a personal interest in the subject of the Near Death Experience, in that my Father, who was a very kind, and down-to-earth person, and called a spade a spade, had a heart attack in his late 20's. He said he felt numbness progressing up his legs and stomach, and knew when it hit his heart that he would be gone. It did, and he described an experience of being on a different plane, and experiencing a new sensation of sight and sound combined into a different dimension all its own. He then said the next thing he remembered was coming back into his body with a painful jolt, and looking up into the face of his brother who was a doctor, trying to revive him. It made a lasting impression on him. I was able to be with him as died for the second time some 60 years later. After I arrived from my rushed trip across the Atlantic, he spoke with me, kissed me goodbye and went directly with no fear, and a great deal of anticipation, to that place he had so briefly visited all those years before. This has made a profound impression on my own beliefs about the after-life, so I declare my prejudice beforehand.

I don't know if he came back from his first death for a purpose, but I do know that if he had not been revived, I would not be here presenting this paper today, since his experience happened before I was born.

To give a clue as to what use to make of a spiritual perspective, we can best look from the perspective of what might happen in our Christmas yet to come, by first exploring our shared Christmas past.

Since much of spiritual truth is conveyed in story and parable, here comes a parable:

Once upon a time, twin boys were conceived in the same womb. When they perceived the life of each other, and their own life, they knew that life was good. One said: 'Lucky we are to have been conceived and to have this world'.

Each budded and grew. They stretched their lungs, churned and turned in their newfound world. They explored their world and in it found the life cord, which gave them life from the mother's blood.

Weeks passed into months and with the advent of each new month, the twins noticed a change in each other and in himself. 'We are changing' said one. 'What can it mean?' The other replied, 'it means that we are drawing near to birth'.

An unsettling chill crept over the twins and they feared, for they knew that birth meant leaving their entire world behind. One said, 'were it up to me, I would live here forever'.

'We must be born', said the other. 'It has happened to all others who went before' (for indeed there was evidence of life there before, as the mother had borne others).

'But might not there be a life after birth?'

'How can there be a life after birth?' cried the one. 'Do we not shed our life cord and also the blood tissues? And have you ever talked to one that has been born? Has anyone re-entered the womb after birth? NO!'

He fell into despair, and in his despair he moaned 'If the purpose of conception and all our growth is that it be ended in birth, then our life is absurd'.

Resigned to despair, the one stabbed the darkness with his unseeing eyes, and as he clutched his precious life cord to his chest said, 'if this is so, and life is absurd, then there can be no mother'.

'But there is a mother', protested the other, 'who gave us our nourishment and our world'.

'We get our own nourishment, and our world has always been here. And if there is a mother, where is she? Have you ever seen her? Does she ever talk to you? NO. We invented the mother because it satisfied a need in us. It made us feel secure and happy'.

(Courtesy of Brothers Newsletter, published by National Assembly of Religious Brothers, Roman Catholic.)

Now can we reflect on what we might say to these twins (which wouldn't be possible of course), but to consider what might we say to the sceptical one, and to the other one, to prepare them for the change?

The change will come anyway, but the question is, what would be useful for them to know or to consider in the face of such overwhelming change? Those are particular questions, which the spiritual disciplines address.

Are there any central Spiritual principles, which prepare a person for this experience to come? If we looked at different spiritual disciplines and identified any particular underlying principles that lie behind various spiritual approaches to going through death to an altered life beyond, what might they be?

I would say one would be contained in the Greek word **kenosis**, which means **emptying**. That is, before something can be changed or filled with spirit or insight, it first of all must be emptied to make room for a transformation.

Kenosis means that before change or growth takes place, there first of all has to be an emptying from what is there before. Basically, to make room for change, we have to create a space for it, by emptying out preconceptions, pride in our abilities, and ourselves and let go of previous attachments.

In Scripture, there is such a kenotic passage, which is that Jesus, being God, had to empty himself of his prerogatives and take on the form of a servant. (Philippians 2:7) Basically, then, there is a process of giving up what has been there before in order to make room for the next task or experience.

In preparation, the believer being encouraged to prune existing possessions and preconceptions practices this emptying in many spiritual traditions. It is much like the television programme, 'The Life Laundry', in which the individual whose house is cluttered, is encouraged to take everything out of the house. Tough choices have to be made. Clutter is thrown away or sold, and only replaced if it is important. Important things are given pride of place, and valuable things are made accessible without the clutter.

This is the same exercise, which a person makes in their life on a spiritual level, and things are pruned in order to highlight one's ultimate concern, which is another name for what is their God.

Another principle can be termed, **solve et coagula** – literally things dissolve, and then reform in a new way. Thomas Moore describes this in his book 'The Soul's Religion'.¹ In his words:

'Apparently we need to be dissolving all the time, even as we get ourselves back together. We have to give up...to the particular way of disintegrating that turns us inside out and shows us our spiritual potential. For this mystery, Renaissance thinkers, so sophisticated in these matters, used Plato's image of a Silenus, an ugly and grotesque statue that opened up to reveal the gods.

Dis-integrate means not to feel whole. The word has an interesting origin. It comes from Latin *tangere* to be touched, and eventually came to mean untouched or complete in itself. *Dis-in-tegrate* is a double negative, leaving us with touched, messed with, not original.

We become most who we are when we allow the spirit to dismember us, unsettling our plans and understandings, remaking us from the very foundations of our existence. Nothing is less sentimental. We find our wholeness as we are peeled away, like an onion, with the process finished when there is nothing left to peel. Perhaps only then will be moved to give up the idea of wholeness altogether, having disintegrated sufficiently to be touched by life, and are therefore empty' (pp108 -109).

Another spiritual principle is that we have to be emptied of **wilfulness** in order to discover **willingness**, which would be a sense of cooperation with what a Loving Universe or God has in mind for us to find a fuller Self. Wilfulness involves holding strictly to our pre-conceived order of the way things are, and should remain. Wilfulness keeps us from looking at things in new ways, or undergoing necessary change. Spiritual disciplines are essentially geared to helping people make this change of basic life stance, from wilfulness to willingness, which makes a fuller life possible on so many different levels.

It happens also on a physical level when we die. As parts of our body are broken down, we have to give them up. However, they are not lost. They are transformed into something different. Our physical bodies dissolve and become part of the trees and plants and birds around us.

This central principle is acted out in the repetitive drama of the Mass, or Eucharist or Holy Communion, as the central principle of the Church. We take bread, and make it as perfect as we can. It is then broken. Once broken, it can never be put back into the same way it was before. That is now impossible. It is lost forever in its original form. However, it is offered up to God, and distributed to the gathered faithful to eat.

Has the original been lost? Yes and No. In its original form it has, but at the end of the service, the bread, representing Christ, is now in the bodies of the people who came, being transformed into living tissue. If people bowed to Christ on the altar, then by rights they should now bow to each other, who now have in part each become living Christ's themselves. This is a central metaphor of the Church as being the principle of what life is all about and the way it works.

There are therefore several levels at work here. There is the **physical** aspect of what happens to the bread itself. There is the **psychological** aspect of re-enacting what happens when we lose someone or something close to us and have to go through the process of grieving and then re-discovering what we have lost, in a new way. And there is the **spiritual**, that this is the way of the spiritual life, where God plays 'hide and seek' presenting Himself in unexpected ways and places, being present all the time, even when appearing lost, but re-appearing in a transformed way.

While the spiritual quest is a seeking after ultimate meaning, Irvin Yalom² sees meaning as coming not in spite of death, but because of the presence of death. In his book 'Existential Psychotherapy', he writes that even though death and disintegration gets us all in the end, and is not avoidable, paradoxically, it is the idea of death which gives meaning to life. Everything takes on value because of limitation. The presence of death trivialises the trivial, makes us aware of that which is meaningful and gives us permission to re-arrange our priorities accordingly.

Imagine going to see your GP, whose face looks grave. He tells you to take a seat, that he has news for you. 'Your tests are back, and unfortunately, I have to tell you that you have a very rare condition, which means that you will live for 300 years. Now I know what a shock this must be to you, since you have trouble deciding what to do next weekend. However, look at the bright side of things, you will be able to retire after 225 years at your job, and you will only have

to sit in queues on the M25 for a century or so. You will probably outlive 7 marriages, and your Christmas card and shopping list for your relatives will look like a phone book!’

Is this good news? Perhaps not. Yet we may all say that we wish to avoid death as long as possible. Some medieval orders of nuns literally slept in their coffins every night, not so much to be morbid but to enhance the value of each day with the reminder of the shortness of life. Similarly, those experiencing a Near Death Experience often say how much it gives them a greater sense of purpose and meaning of life.

The central spiritual principle, then, is that there is an expectation that nothing is permanent and that everything will ultimately be transformed (the caterpillar into butterfly). So we will be changed to be able to move into a new dimension, and part of our discipline is to prepare our selves to be receptive of that change by attention to our attitude and intention, which will be helpful or unhelpful to that process.

The basis behind this change is that on a spiritual level, the willingness to let go and go through change, is what makes it possible to more fully find the Christ in me or Buddha nature, which is the greater Self, which is fuller than the self.

Let’s now look at what might be happening in the changeover to a transformed life after death, from eyewitness accounts of what happened on a physical level with Jesus as a prototype.

Jesus’ Resurrection

When I first went to seminary, I expressed my doubts about Christianity. After studying psychology, I thought that perhaps Christianity might be based on wish-fulfilment of those who, like most the rest of us, feared death as being the end. Thankfully, I was told by my teachers to take my doubts seriously, and to take some dedicated time to attempt to prove that the Gospels were wish-fulfilment. Going through the Gospels with a fine-toothed comb, I discovered in fact that it was quite the opposite; that the accounts seemed to be eyewitness accounts, where those who experienced these events related seemingly irrelevant material, just as an eyewitness would. Particularly interesting were the narratives of those who encountered Jesus after the resurrection.

The first striking thing was that even though Jesus had been with his followers fairly constantly for the preceding three years, **he was not at first recognised by Mary**, who thought him to be the gardener. This is unusual because she had been with him much of the time the preceding three years of his life. Part of this may have been the shock of not expecting to see him alive (John 20:11-18). However, she does respond to him when she hears him pronounce her name. This implies that after the resurrection that Jesus was **the same, but different**. He was recognisable, but not immediately recognisable. In his appearance on the road to Emmaus, the people he was travelling with did not recognise him until they invited him into their home, and they recognised him in the way that he broke bread, in short, by an intimate and recognisable gesture.

Jesus also tells Mary Magdalene (John 20:17) 'Do not touch me, for I have not ascended to the Father'. The word touch (hapto) means to touch, attach, or cling to, and the word is used to indicate also to 'kindle a fire' or to have intercourse with. (I Corinthians. 7:1)

The indication, then, may be that Jesus' body was still in an intermediate state of transformation, which had not yet come to its completion. This is referred to as the 'resurrection body' (to soma tes dozes autou, the glorified, transformed, god-infused body), in short, the body in which his divine condition is manifested. While it is visible to us, it is not entirely contained within our earthly dimension.

What are the qualities of this body according to eyewitness accounts? In two appearances described in the gospel of John, Jesus appeared in a room that was locked, and showed them his wounds, He then 'breathed on them', infusing them with spirit (John 20:19-23). In a later appearance, he invites Thomas to put his fingers where the nails were, and to put his hands into his side (John 20:24 - 27).

What this seems to indicate is that he is in a physical state, which is more real than the walls of the room. He can go through the walls, past locked doors, and still be touched, and later can eat fish. He is more real than our reality. He therefore is not only in a real body but also in a body that possesses a greater physical reality than our present ones. This affords us a possible glimpse into a new dimension,

The Time Factor

It might be good at this point to mention the time factor. One of the important factors from the scientific point of view in the study of NDEs is the point in time in which these experiences happen.

From a spiritual, as well as from a scientific point of view, it could be said that from either perspective, we would expect the factor of time to be distorted from the one in which we currently live. Spiritually, a difference can be described in terms of the two Greek words for time, *kairos* and *chronos*.

Chronos, from which we get the word for chronometer, is measurable time, measured in hours, minutes and mini-seconds.

Kairos may be described as 'when I was young', 'time spent at Granny's house', timeless time when we are with the person we love. In this time, measurable time does not apply. In the Orthodox Church, chronologically, the Eucharist lasts sometimes up to 3 hours; however when the worshiper is there, they live in God's time, lighting candles, sometimes going in and out of the service, meditating, standing or sitting. Living in this time prepares one for **heaven standard time**, as it were. Perhaps the timeless time, in which older people live, is also just such a preparation.

There also is the scientific consideration in space/time theory, where our measurable time only applies to where we are on earth. In the experiment where two atomic clocks were set together, and then one was taken in an airplane and circled for several hours in the sky, there was found to be a time difference between the two clocks when the plane landed. Time on earth, was found to be slightly faster than that above the earth.

In short, trying to fit what the person experiences in the NDE into the time frame of body monitors in the operating theatre would be misleading, should they in fact exist in a different dimension.

I was also struck with the fact that the Church measures the time on earth between the resurrection and the ascension, where Christ leaves this plane altogether in a physical sense, as being 40 days. This is very similar to the concept of **bardo** in Tibetan Buddhism, referring to the 49 day period between death and rebirth, during which time the individual exists as an ever-changing continuum of consciousness, experiencing either enhancement or confusion, while separate from the body.

Another interesting thing is the passive connotations of the resurrection. Jesus did not so much rise from the dead, as **was raised** from the dead by God (I Corinthians 15:4). This is therefore something, which can be expected to happen to others (Romans 8:10-12).

So to summarise: Jesus was the same, but different, recognisable, but not immediately recognisable. He was identified through his gestures and his wounds.

There was also was a process, which was not entirely completed, when he first met Mary Magdalene at the tomb. He was in a physical body, but one that was in a more real dimension than our own. And something happened to him, rather than something he did himself - a prototype of what potentially can happen to others.

From these observations of Jesus' resurrection, an important concept of Christianity is a belief in the resurrection of the body, rather than the immortality of the soul. That is, that the physical and the spiritual belong together, that the soul or spirit inhabits a physical container, which is appropriate to the state in which it exists. If we enter into a different dimension when we die, then we would expect to inhabit a body that would be equipped to live in that dimension. There also seems to be a continuity of consciousness and identity in some form.

I was struck in reading the Dalai Lama's book 'Advice on Dying and Living a Better Life' ³ of points of contact between the Christian and the Tibetan Buddhist position, which would make for interesting dialogue. The advice given is that during the process of dying, there is an advantage in being able to accept the reality of what is happening, that we are dying, and that we have no power in ourselves during this time. Therefore, it is important to accept the process of disintegration and re-formation that we are undergoing, and go with it, trying not to label the experience as good or bad, and that in even as this process is happening that **we retain a sense of compassion for others**. This is also very much in the Christian way, that during the crucifixion Jesus retained and expressed compassion for others, the thief on the adjoining cross, his mother and John, and for the women of Jerusalem, even in his powerlessness, retaining a sense of concern for others, and a basic faith that the transformation, no matter how painful, is friendly and for a purpose.

There is an intermediate state, where we are in both worlds at once. Sister Ruth SLG ⁴ beautifully expresses an aspect of this intermediate state in a poem:

I pause upon the brink of the unknown;
I am neither there nor here,
On this side, as in a dream, men move,
Doing the phantom things we do on earth;
On that side, through the silence, something stirs,
A wave of living surges and is gone.
The one I see as figures on a screen,
Things without substance;
The other hear, and yet hear not,
As one that has no ears.
To the known I cannot return, for I have passed
Where knowledge is not;
Yet the unknown I cannot touch,
Save as a pebble the sea, which covers it.
O God, unknown to me, life to my death,
See how, forgetting thou rememberest me;
Can I forget, and so remember thee?

However, there may be places, where we can get stuck, which spiritual midwives might need to know about.

What are possible ‘Sticking Points?’

We may fight against the process of letting go because of unresolved things, or regrets for past actions, perhaps for something we may have done or not done, or with attachments (loving or otherwise) from which we find it difficult to break our selves free. As someone who has been involved in the Ministry of Deliverance team, attachments where people continue to hang around dwellings or places, which have been important in a life where they are no longer living are often problems.

It is much like a relationship, which has ended, in which the person feels they have not been given a choice, and so they may hang around places where they used to live or stalk old attachments, which cannot be given up. I sometimes feel that the Ministry of Deliverance can be a form of ‘post-death counselling’ to help people move on and live where they are actually living, rather than in the past.

Sometimes the sticking points are well-meaning loved ones, who resist the process of dying and urge the person to stay behind, rather than to let go and enter into a new realm of existence. It means a lot to the person who is dying to be given permission to let go and enter into a new form of existence. Often it is the relatives, rather than the person who is dying who need the support in dealing with this.

I recall being asked to come to attend to a patient who was ‘dying badly’ in the psychiatric hospital where I am chaplain. The nurse, who phoned, said there

was something else I needed to know, but she would tell me when I arrived. That is always a bad sign.

When I arrived, I was told that the person was very distressed. I asked what was wrong, and they said they could not tell, because the woman had not spoken for 15 years but, they added, she can hear.

One of the last senses to go is the sense of hearing. There is also a condensing phenomenon present when a person dies, where one wrongdoing, or one unfinished task stands as a symbol for all the mistakes and unfinished tasks of the person's life. In the way that is dealt with, the person can feel disencumbered for their journey.

Then I drew up a chair next to the patient, and two of the other nurses came round to the other side of the bed. I identified myself and reflected to the person that she seemed troubled about something. I asked her to picture in her mind what she was troubled about. At this, she became agitated. I then said that if she could put this into the hands of God, for him to resolve, He might bring something out of it, which she could not have anticipated. As she was able to do this, she would feel calmer.

After a while, she became very peaceful. I then said that she would feel the presence of a light, and that when she was ready, she could step into the light. We held her hand and she died peacefully 20 minutes later.

I give this as an example, for even if we do not know what is holding the person back, we can still act as midwives to the person on their journey from our end.

Are there any useful roadmaps for this process?

I find it helpful, when I can have a road map or metaphor, which helps give a perspective on what may be happening. An old friend and fellow group analyst, Dr. Murray Cox, wrote a book called *Mutative Metaphors*⁵ looking at the particular metaphors that helped people get a bearing on where they were, in order to handle new experiences.

There is probably a connection between physics and metaphysics on this, in that metaphors help flesh out theories about the ways the universe might possibly operate. While I am not all that knowledgeable about the subject, I was struck, both as a priest and as a group analyst of how 'String Theory' seems to me to have some elements that might clarify what happens in different dimensions of existence.

The Matrix

I will start with an idea, which is shared by group analysis and physics. It is called the matrix. The matrix is an interconnected foundational network, which might be pictured much as a spider's web. As individuals, we are nodal points at interconnecting lines on this web. We are interconnected, so that if something happens to the web at any point, everyone on the web will resonate in some way with what is happening elsewhere. This idea is also picked up in chaos theory: a butterfly waving its wings on one continent can subtly influence conditions elsewhere. It looks at the interconnectedness of all of life.

I was struck with the reality of the matrix theory in supervising groups in the hospital where I work, where individuals and groups began to experience themes, which were happening nationally and internationally, as personal problems.

During the month of the Royal wedding when Charles married Diana, there were not only national disturbances such as the Toxteth riots, but individuals in the hospital were filled with envious rage, and there was much violence. At the end of the month, individuals who had not formed stable relationships before were getting engaged. Similarly, during the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of York, the same thing happened. Nationally, there were riots in St. Paul's Bristol, at the beginning of the month. At the end of the month people were pairing up.

Waiting lists also shot up, or diminished, at the beginning and then at the end of the first Gulf War.

This is the matrix effect. An individual is not alone, but very much connected with a larger process, which is happening on many different levels. One thinks of a salmon being drawn back to its source both for its individual death and birth of its eggs for the future. It follows a larger process, which may not be fully understood, but which makes sense on a larger matrix.

String Theory

I was very much struck by String theory as an intriguing road map of multi-dimensional thinking. I can hardly begin to understand the theory but take comfort in the fact that being new, its implications are not fully understood by many other people in the field. To my mind, it seems that string theory is the matrix put into a multi-dimensional loop. Here space/time has six extra dimensions curled into a Calabi-Yau shape. Here, different dimensions are curled around one another.

In this theory, it may be that we can go through from one dimension into another because they are very close, though in a different state. Physically, they may be close, but inter-dimensionally they may be quite different.

The existentialist theologian Paul Tillich described God as 'the Ground of Being'. In other words, the matrix of very existence, in which we live and move and have our being in this basic life form, would express itself in many different thought-forms and modes of Being. Yet in essence, they would be different manifestations of the same encompassing Life force operating in different dimensions. We would be unaware of the nature of the surrounding life force, in the same way in which our about-to-be-born twins in the parable could not be aware of the world they were about to enter, which is so near, and yet so far from comprehension.

The interesting thing for our discussion is how close to us in this existence, another living dimension might be. It could be right next to us without us being aware of it. One of the metaphors, which are used helpfully in String theory, is that of a sliced loaf of bread. We can see the bread as a whole. It has three dimensions. However there are also the added dimensions of the interface between each slice of bread.

Imagine yourself on the outside of one slice of bread, passing over to the next slice. It is still the same bread, but it is also another entity with its own surface and has another side, which is not visible from the surface you are entering. Communication might still be possible between interfacing slices when you were on the one side, but if you went through to the other side, that might no longer be possible. While the slices are so close together, they have surfaces and aspects, which are not visible from the adjoining slice.

Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven as both within and without, yet 'closer than hands and feet', something seen yet unseen, partially sensed yet fully realisable later. He describes it as something that is simultaneously both within us, yet is also to come in the future in its fullness. The caterpillar is simultaneously both a caterpillar and a future butterfly, yet in caterpillar form nothing like what it is to become.

There is a story of two caterpillars walking along the pavement discussing the meaning of life. Suddenly, a huge shadow passes over them. They look up and see a beautiful butterfly just above them. 'Ha!' says the one to the other, 'you'll never catch me up in one of those things!'

For Jesus, and perhaps for others, the post-resurrection appearances would be possible close to his physical death on earth, but less so later. Yet for a time, there could still be connection.

I am using this as a metaphor – a road map of beginning to explore what might be happening as we encounter the interface between these dimensions, as a person encounters a Near Death Experience. They are able both to look back at the dimension from which they have come, yet find themselves able to do things, which they were not able to do before. They can hover over their own bodies, and see things from a different perspective, which they previously have not been able to do with their own bodies. They are able to experience a different dimension, such as sound and sight combined. They are able, even in this different dimension, to experience a common purpose and connection between the lives, founded in one living and knowledgeable Being or common matrix, spanning different dimensions.

For me it is exciting that physicists are exploring, at least in theory, different interconnecting dimensions, which those involved in the study of metaphysics have also been studying for centuries.

Is there a common ground for dialogue and exploration?

I would like to end with some questions for dialogue. These questions come from someone who has been a spiritual midwife in helping people in transitional states of life and from observations I have made in my work in the ministry of deliverance.

The material presented in the BBC programme on the NDE on the whole gives positive experience of NDEs, which has been life changing for the person returning. But what about the casualties? What happens when the transition does not go well?

In managing re-entry to earth, the attitude of a spacecraft is quite important. Too shallow and it bounces off the earth's atmosphere and stays in space. If it is too steep, it burns up. The attitude has to be at the right angle to negotiate the change. The most common factor between spiritual disciplines is working on the attitude angle of those approaching the next life.

Is there any evidence from NDE research on the casualties – those who, because of addiction to something unfinished here, confusion, or indecision, seem caught between worlds; living neither in one or the other?

Many talk about the experience of that choice in the NDE whether to return or stay. How about those who, being undecided or confused, get caught in between?

What is the most useful working partnership between the spiritual and scientific disciplines? This might be both for research, as well as application of what is learned to serving our common clients. What principles and lessons can be drawn for both our disciplines in our approach and the way we work?

So, coming full circle, what might we say to those unborn twins and perhaps ourselves about to enter into a new state of life? Perhaps to keep our scepticism, but drop preconceptions about all life remaining the same, and the idea that one outlook on life explains everything. Respect and enjoy old attachments, but be prepared to give them up when the time arrives. Be prepared to modify your certainties when that is called for. The universe is ultimately friendly, but mind where you step; attitude is important. No matter what the pain of transformation and loss, in so far as possible, strive to maintain your compassion and love for others. For ultimately all forms of life are connected with ourselves in some way. The stranger and the strange may be God in disguise, in one of His many forms, so keep an open mind.

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