

Is There Life After Death?

Is There Life After Death? a presentation of a book review by Dr. Alexander Moreira-Almeida of a book by David Lester, *Is There Life After Death? An Examination of the Empirical Evidence* (McFarland, 2005). The book review will be appearing in the *Journal of Near-Death Studies* (Editor- Bruce Greyson).

This readable book presents a vast bibliography and describes the results of the studies reviewed in an objective and fair way. The book is divided into five parts: (1) "Views on Life After Death," presenting some religious views and the profile of believers; (2) "Near-Death Experiences," a comprehensive review of the near-death experience (NDE), which comprises one-third of the book; (3) "Reincarnation"; (4) "Other Phenomena," including apparitions of the dead, hallucinations in widowhood, deathbed visions, possession, mediums, and poltergeists; and (5) "Conclusions."

On the last page, the conclusion is that "the research reviewed in this book fails to be convincing that there is life after death". However, some selection biases and epistemological theses present in the book weaken this conclusion's generalization. The selection biases may strongly influence the conclusions because they led to the rejection of the large majority of the empirical evidence available and to focus on less evidential studies. Second, regarding epistemological posture, it was assumed certain epistemological theses that are unwarranted and not defensible according to the contemporary philosophy of science. I presented a brief discussion about these two shortcomings, because they are very prevalent but remain usually unrecognized in discussions about survival research.

In spite of the limitations discussed above, this book is a good review of NDEs and reincarnation. Lester deserves our esteem for keeping a respectful approach toward investigators with whom he disagrees. His book is a good opportunity to raise the crucial debate about the mind-body and the survival questions, as well as to stimulate us to start in-depth studies in these highly exciting and controversial fields. (Presenter's summary)