

## *Welcome to the Nothing Buttery*

AT THE END of our street there is a factory producing tons of surplus fat and lard. It's called the NOTHING BUTTERY. As you pass by, you can hear the cheerful sound of workers all the day singing the Company Song, its delightful refrain echoing all around: "Nothing but . . . nothing but . . . nothing but." Now I see our homely little Nothing Buttery has a big brother rival based at the University of Michigan. There they also sing the song, "Nothing but . . . ." And one of the most popular verses in their song goes like this: "Near death experiences are NOTHING BUT doubly-increased gamma oscillations in electrical activity in the brain at the point of death."

Scientists everywhere are welcoming this as a terrific increase in our understanding of what near death experiences might be. Unfortunately it is a tale told by an idiot full of flashing electrical activity and *non sequiturs* and signifying nothing. It is just part of the accumulated dogma of reductionist—nothing but—rubbish of scientific materialism.

What, the innocent philosopher asks, can be meant by the statement that electrical conditions *cause* these NDEs, or indeed that electrical conditions *cause* any of our experiences? We observe the electrical conditions and we note the experiences. All we are entitled to say is that the electrical conditions and the perceived experiences are alternative descriptions of one and the same event: the one lab-based and forensic, the other personal and subjective. They are the inside and the outside, so to speak, of the same phenomenon.

The only thing that emerges about all this is that the "discovery" of a correlation between electrical activity in the brain and NDEs proves exactly nothing concerning the ontological status or reality of the NDEs. For electrical activity in the brain accompanies *all* our ideas and perceptions, including our illusions, delusions, visions of mirages and the sight of the wife at breakfast. When I look at a vase of flowers on the table, a scientist—if he had nothing better to do—could, if he wished, clock my brain for electrical activity. Such electrical activity, or the lack of it, can have no bearing at all on whether the table and the vase of flowers exist or don't exist. The same goes, of course, for the correlation of electrical activity with NDEs.

But the general asylum of scientific materialism and reductionist gormlessness persists and receives widespread acceptance in the mass media—as if it actually gave us information. It doesn't. And if this is a sample of the catalogue of fatuities produced by the Nothing Buttery, I'll stick to olive oil.

*Peter Mullen*

to return to home page click on [www.edgewaysbooks.com](http://www.edgewaysbooks.com)