

While Carl Jung's NDE is well known in near-death studies, that of one of his patients has often been overlooked. Nearly dying during a difficult child birth, an unnamed woman had an out-of-body experience and a vision of another world. Her observations of events in her hospital room, from a bodiless vantage point near the ceiling, were later verified.

Inexplicably, Jung did not mention his own experience when discussing that of his patient, or vice versa. Jung's NDE occurred in 1944, and though he published the woman's in 1952 it is unclear if it actually occurred before or after. In the discussion he does mention other examples of NDEs and related phenomena, in a tone that is markedly more clinical and less full of wonder than the account of his own experience. Although he does not state outright that he believes the experience to have been genuinely metaphysical, his observations prefigure contemporary arguments that effect.

A woman patient, whose reliability and truthfulness I have no reason to doubt, told me that her first birth was very difficult. After thirty hours of fruitless labour the doctor considered that a forceps delivery was indicated. This was carried out under light narcosis. She was badly torn and suffered great loss of blood. When the doctor, her mother, and her husband had gone, and everything was cleared up, the nurse wanted to eat, and the patient saw her turn round at the door and ask, "Do you want anything before I go to supper?" She tried to answer, but couldn't. She had the feeling that she was sinking through the bed into a bottomless void. She saw the nurse hurry to the bedside and seize her hand in order to take her pulse. From the way she moved her fingers to and fro the patient thought it must be almost imperceptible. Yet she herself felt quite all right, and was slightly amused at the nurse's alarm. She was not in the least frightened. That was the last she could remember for a long time. The next thing she was aware of was that, without feeling her body and its position, she was looking down from a point in the ceiling and could see everything going on in the room below her: she saw herself lying in the bed, deadly pale, with closed eyes. Beside her stood the nurse. The doctor paced up and down the room excitedly, and it seemed to her that he had lost his head and didn't know what to do. Her relatives crowded to the door. Her mother and her husband came in and looked at her with frightened faces. She told herself it was too stupid of them to think she was going to die, for she would certainly come round again. All this time she knew that behind her was a glorious, park-like landscape shining in the brightest colours, and in particular an emerald green meadow with short grass, which sloped gently upwards beyond a wrought-iron gate leading into the park. It was spring, and little gay flowers such as she had never seen before were scattered about in the grass. The whole demesne sparkled in the sunlight, and all the colours were of an indescribable splendour. The sloping meadow was flanked on both sides by dark green trees. It gave her the impression of a clearing in the forest, never yet trodden by the foot of man. "I knew that this was the entrance to another world, and that if I turned round to gaze at the picture directly, I should feel tempted to go in at the gate, and thus step out of life." She did not actually see this landscape, as her back was turned to it, but she knew it was there. She felt there was nothing to stop her from entering in through the gate. She only knew that she would turn back to her body and would not die. That was why she found the agitation of the doctor and the distress of her relatives stupid and out of place.

The next thing that happened was that she awoke from her coma and saw the nurse bending over her in bed. She was told that she had been unconscious for about half

an hour. The next day, some fifteen hours later, when she felt a little stronger, she made a remark to the nurse about the incompetent and “hysterical” behaviour of the doctor during her coma. The nurse energetically denied this criticism in the belief that the patient had been completely unconscious at the time and could therefore have known nothing of the scene. Only when she described in full detail what had happened during the coma was the nurse obliged to admit that the patient had perceived the events exactly as they happened in reality.

One might conjecture that this was simply a psychogenic twilight state in which a split-off part of consciousness still continued to function. The patient, however, had never been hysterical and had suffered a genuine heart collapse followed by syncope due to cerebral anaemia, as all the outward and evidently alarming symptoms indicated. She really was in a coma and ought to have had a complete psychic black-out and been altogether incapable of clear observation and sound judgment. The remarkable thing was that it was not an immediate perception of the situation through indirect or unconscious observation, but she saw the whole situation from above, as though “her eyes were in the ceiling,” as she put it.

Indeed, it is not easy to explain how such unusually intense psychic processes can take place, and be remembered, in a state of severe collapse, and how the patient could observe actual events in concrete detail with closed eyes. One would expect such obvious cerebral anaemia to militate against or prevent the occurrence of highly complex psychic processes of that kind.

-- from Jung, Carl (1952) *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press (rev. ed. 2010), pp. 91-93.