

Diving off the Deep End: Interview with Eben Alexander, MD

April 1, 2014

Life Connection Magazine

Online: <http://lifeconnectionmagazine.com/diving-off-the-deep-end-interview-with-eben-alexander-md/>

By: Beverly Brodsky with Dr. Eben Alexander

Edited by Yolaine M. Stout

Dr. Eben Alexander, a Harvard and Duke University trained neurosurgeon, is the New York Times bestselling author of Proof of Heaven – an account of his near-death experience that transformed his beliefs about consciousness. The following is a portion from an interview with Dr. Eben Alexander conducted by Beverly Brodsky, who also had a near-death experience and is head of the San Diego chapter of the International Association for Near-Death Studies.

BB: *Your book really changed the level of conversation about near-death experiences. What surprised you the most about your experience?*

EA : The biggest surprise was the complete revelation and reversal of my prior thinking. The most profound revelation of all this was that the brain doesn't create this kind of deeper message of soul, spirit, or consciousness at all. And it's kind of shocking to me that the reductive materialist science has been able to get away for such a long time with such a simplistic, patently obvious falsity as saying the brain creates consciousness. The evidence is lying all around about the brain, mind and consciousness and yet I never really put it together. The obvious kind of understanding is not that brain creates consciousness, but the consciousness, soul or spirit is something that exists fundamentally and drives all the rest of reality.

BB: *Was it mostly through your medical training that you took on a materialist world-view?*

EA: I would say it is mainly my scientific training. Scientific materialism is that whole idea that if we understand everything about subatomic physics and chemistry and biology, we can explain everything. That science, of course, assumes that the brain creates consciousness -that it's all birth to death and nothing more. It's very simplistic, so it's also quite seductive. That's what, of course, leads many modern scientists and cosmologists into that trap of thinking they might have the theory of everything. The very fact that some human – no matter how smart this human thinks they are – can be tempted into thinking the mind can understand everything and everything about all creation should be a gigantic red flag. And, of course, my journey showed me very clearly that the human mind or brain will never, ever fully understand all of everything. It's impossible by pretty much by definition. And yet we're trapped into that thinking. I know that in looking back over the history of the thought leaders, science and philosophy, going back thousands of years we can be tempted into thinking that we might know all that there is to know; but, of course, it's ridiculous to assume that any kind of sentient being could ever know whether they're close to knowing all there is to know. It should be clear that we would never, ever converge on complete knowing of all there is to know. And I think that was probably the biggest culprit for me. I was buying into our modern scientific materialism as do many scientists. We think that this is the big 'ol pathway towards truth without realizing the tremendous problems of assuming that the scientific method and our reductive, materialist science could ever explain the majority of anything, much less the majority of all existence. The

only thing any one of us knows that truly exists is our own consciousness. We're very seduced into thinking that what we do is the external world – the physical world is all exactly as it appears to be – whereas our science, if anything, increasingly tells us that our day-to-day sense of that material world is completely unlike what's probably underlying it all. And that is where we have to make sure we remember that our view of the external world is really a model put together in our mind of something. If you start taking it too seriously as reality as it appears to be, that's when you start getting very misled by it all.

BB: *For those of us who have had this experience, the assumptions of materialism are laughable.*

EA: Right. They just fail miserably and even if you haven't had a near-death experience, when you see them flailing around trying to explain the bright light, the tunnel, with simplistic, rudimentary, pseudo-explanations, I mean it really is pathetic. So, of course, pure materialism fails miserably and needs to be rejected. And that is what I think is happening now. Science is expanding and there are a lot of scientists who get this. There are still a few that are stuck in the simplistic, kindergarten-ish level of thinking that I used to be stuck in. They may have the bully pulpit with the *New York Times*, or of the big press or the *Scientific American* for that matter. They believe that if they figure out the brain, they will get it all figured out. Complete, infinite understanding of the brain will not answer all of the questions about consciousness. The most advanced thinking fronts of neuroscience are fully aware of that.

BB: *Do you think that we will ever be able to reconcile science and spirit?*

EA: There's a far grander wisdom out there and we need to open up and embrace it I think that in fact what we are seeing now is that science is on the verge of expanding tremendously to fully embrace spirit and the deep mystery of consciousness and I think that that is inevitable, because the pure materialism continues to fail. That pure materialist science that says you know it's all just the whirling of those electrons, protons, quarks, atoms, molecules, cells in the brain – you know – physics, chemistry, biology – once you understand all that, you understand everything whereas, in fact, that very same science is completely clueless on any possible explanation of how the physical brain might give rise to consciousness. And that is an absolutely gigantic red flag about the frailties and the failures of our modern, materialistic, mindset in science. I would say science and spirituality are coming together in a very strong way, but this involves mainly a maturation of science to a much higher level towards embracing all of truth. And, of course, at its most fundamental level, any version of truth, the understanding of truth implies a much more complete understanding of what consciousness is, given that it is the only thing that any one of us really knows exists. We need a far grander understanding of what consciousness is before we could ever move forward with an understanding of the nature of reality. It's now time to move into the deep end of the pool. There's a far grander wisdom out there and we need to open up and embrace it.

Dr. Eben Alexander will be giving a presentation and book signing in San Diego on April 27th from 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm at Market Creek and Venues, at 404 Euclid Ave, San Diego 92114.