

## BOOK REVIEW

**The Final Choice—Death or Transcendence?** by Michael Grosso. Hove, UK: White Crow Books, 2017. 226 pp. \$15.99 (paperback). ISBN 978-1-78677-029-5.

I remember being intrigued by the title of this book years ago, as it is a revised and updated version of an earlier work of Michael Grosso. The title seems to imply that we all have a choice as we are leaving the physical body, the option of expiring into nothingness or moving to a realm beyond the material world. I wondered why one would choose the former, and exactly who is making that choice? By the time one finishes the logical sequence of evidence, history, and theory that unfolds in the book, it becomes clear that the title's inference is not what some might expect. Grosso believes that there are no final choices. Accepting finality is not logical when one comes to believe that our consciousness survives bodily death, and he believes that physical death is not permanent extinction, but a gateway to more living.

The underlying and not so subtle message in the book has not only stood the test of time, but has become more relevant in view of today's state of affairs. Considering the increasing threat of nuclear obliteration, climatic shifts, world divisiveness and conflict, natural disasters, pollution, famine, mass shootings, drug epidemics, and refugees roaming the planet, are these potential calamities something that could jolt the collective mind into a greater spiritual reality? The author has an interesting theory based upon near-death experience research.

We know the transformative and lasting effects that an NDE can have for those individuals who have had such an experience. Grosso envisions a collective near-death experience, perhaps subtle at first, but a shift that has the power to evolve consciousness to the point that we move away from materialist reductionism and celebrate a new way of thinking. It is a theory worth pondering. We know that actually facing imminent death is not a prerequisite to having an NDE, and many report such experiences when put in dangerous situations where death or injury is possible. One can certainly make the argument that we are all collectively in an environment where such a catalyst to transformation is building. Grosso's hope is that this transcendence will move us away from fanaticism, self-preservation at all costs, and denial, and into an environment of diversity, compassion, and completeness. Perhaps our fears and problems stem from a feeling that

something is missing, that we are fragments of a greater self that is looking to once again become whole.

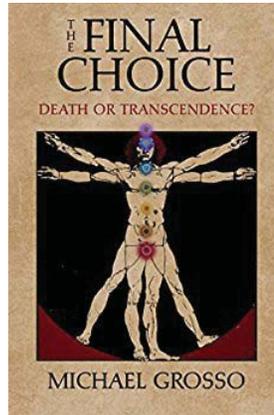
This raises an interesting question, and one that I have thought about for years. Does being immersed in a troubled world, an environment fraught with danger and an incubator of hopelessness, actually stimulate one to search for meaning and purpose? Or, do such circumstances cause people to throw up their hands, accept the fact that life is short, and live their lives in any fashion that gives them the most pleasure? My personal experience over the years, as well as observation of the bereaved, leads me to the conclusion that mental or physical trauma in a great many cases are triggers to exploration. When stripped down to nothing, when life is no longer what was expected, many are compelled to contemplate the big questions about the possibility of survival, meaning, and purpose. In that vein, we all may have already embarked upon Grosso's envisioned collective NDE, even though it may be only at the subconscious level.

Grosso believes that the mystery of death is a mystery mostly to fence-sitters and wishful thinkers, and clearly believes that we all need to be proactive in fostering personal non-local experiences. Essential to this quest is the concept of reduction, which Grosso warns should not be confused with psychophysical reductionism. Reduction, as Grosso uses the term, denotes a process that allows us to detach . . . "about truth, and frees us to simply observe and experience without explanations and evaluations." He points out that the mystics, yogis, shamans, etc., are masters of reduction, able to transcend restrictions of the physical world. Practices such as fasting and induced altered states allow spiritual energy to be directed elsewhere. He cites Henri Bergson, who believed that death removes a filter and allows transcendence. It reminds me of a comment I once made to a scientist who looked at me like I had two heads when I told him that the greatest obstacle to communication with other realms is the human brain.

To emphasize the danger of the nuclear age in which we presently reside, the author coined the term "technocalypse," which he defines as "the convergence of technology and the apocalyptic imagination." Science now has the capability to wipe people from the face of the earth with uncanny precision, and Grosso warns that "Science needs to recover its *conscience*, and its *consciousness*." He hopes that in the future, science, along with mythology and archetypes of death and enlightenment, will ring a new philosophy of life and death.

The subject of the nature of psi also is addressed in the book, specifically as it relates to evolution, life after death, and transcendence. The function of psychic abilities is probed, and uncovering the purpose of psi is a much bigger challenge than simply proving its existence. The author looks upon psi not from a biological perspective by measuring its practicality in the physical

realm, but as a mediating mechanism that allows the integration of other worldly influences. According to Grosso, “If the goal of life is more life, higher, freer, more complex forms of life, then our psychic potentials represent the power of life transcending its biological template.” I don’t necessarily agree that the effects of psi in our physical environment are marginal, even though it would appear so due to their elusive nature, but it makes sense to me that psi could be part of a design that gives us the capacity to prepare for and continue on in a non-physical environment. As the author suggests, “Psi, we may think of it as our passport to the next world.”



When we consider the empirical and anecdotal evidence from end-of-life experiences, it sure seems as if they are purposeful as compared with random biological expressions caused by a dying brain. Grosso is well aware of the importance of parapsychological research, but also recognizes the value of primordial imagery that manifest in dreams, visions, and mythologies. Like Jung, he believes that archetypes are an expression of collective experience and provide great insight into life and death. Death can be thought of as enlightenment, and the author uses the term ADE (Archetype of Death and Enlightenment). The concept of death as an “opening to transcendent consciousness” is certainly expressed through modern near-death experience research, but also is prevalent in past literature, the arts, and mystical and shamanic tradition.

*The Final Choice* is not so much an exercise in philosophical conjecture as it is a call to action. In this respect, it differs from previous works on the subject of death and transcendence. It is quite clear that Grosso firmly believes that we no longer can stand on the sidelines and refuse to acknowledge what our higher self knows to be true. Faith-based hope is no longer enough to change our worldview. Our planet can be viewed as being on life support, and a collective knowing and awakening is not only necessary, but within our reach. We need to look past materialist science and embrace our true nature and role in a continuum of life. As Grosso writes,

There may be a cosmic goal driving us, but we don’t know what it is or what our part is. So in the transition we are forced to improvise and write our own script, and put to the test the idea of transformative truth.

I intend to heed his advice and suggest that we all become part of his vision.

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