

Dr. Kübler-Ross Sees and Talks with Dead Woman

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In her book, *On Life After Death*, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a pioneer in the study of the near-death experience (NDE), states that her first account of an NDE came from "a certain Mrs. Schwartz." After being declared dead following 45 minutes of resuscitation attempts, Mrs. Schwartz began to show signs of life and was revived. She lived for another year-and-a-half, during which time she met Dr. Ross and related her experience during a seminar on death and dying at the University of Chicago.



Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Some 10 months after Mrs. Schwartz's death, Dr. Ross decided to discontinue the death and dying seminar. After giving her lecture on death and dying in a classroom, she was discussing shutting down the seminar with a minister who had worked with her in the program. As they approached an elevator, where the minister would leave her, Ross noticed a woman standing in front of the elevator. The woman looked familiar, but Ross could not immediately place her. As soon as the minister got on the elevator, the woman, who Ross described as being somewhat transparent, approached her and asked her

if she could accompany her to her office. Dr. Ross came to realize that it was Mrs. Schwartz and began to question her own awareness.

"This was the longest walk of my life," Ross related. "I am a psychiatrist. I work with schizophrenic patients all the time, and I love them. When they would have visual hallucinations I would tell them." She told herself that she was seeing Mrs. Schwartz but that it couldn't be. She did a reality check on herself and wondered if she had seen too many schizophrenic patients and was beginning to see things herself.

"I even touched her skin to see if it was cold or warm, or if the skin would disappear when I touched it. It was the most incredible walk I have ever taken, not knowing why I was doing what I was doing. I was both an observing psychiatrist and a patient."

When they reached Ross' office door, Mrs. Schwartz opened it and told Ross that she had come back for two reasons, first to thank her and the Reverend Gaines, a former minister in the program, for the help they had given her, and, secondly, to ask her not to stop her work on death and dying.

Ross got to her desk and did another reality check, touching her desk, chair, and a pen. "I was hoping she would disappear," Ross continues the story. "But she didn't. She just stood there and lovingly said, 'Dr. Ross, did you hear me? Your work is not finished. We will help you and you will know when the time is right, but do not stop now. Promise?'"

As a further test of her awareness or sanity, Ross asked the woman if she would write a note to Reverend Gaines. Mrs. Schwartz complied. She then got up from her chair, and said,

“Dr. Ross, you promise,” to which Ross replied, “I promise. “With that Mrs. Schwartz disappeared.

Ross kept the note and later told the story to many friends and associates. She considered having fingerprint and handwriting experts examine the note to see if they matched up with the fingerprints and handwriting of Mrs. Schwartz, but she never got around to it and eventually gave the note to the Rev. Renford Gaines. Researcher Boyce Batey later contacted Gaines, who had changed his name to Mwalimu Imara, in line with his African heritage, at the Boston Center for Religion and Psychotherapy, Inc. Imara informed Batey that because of various confidentiality concerns relative to Mrs. Schwartz and her family, he could not provide a copy of the note. However, he provided Batey with the exact wording, viz. “Hello there, Dropped in to see Dr. Ross. One of two on the top of my ‘list’. You being the other. I’ll never find or know anyone to take the place of you two. I want you to know, as I’ve told her, I’m at peace at home now. I want you to know you helped me. The simple Thank you is not enough. But please know how much I mean it. Thank you again. Mary Schwartz. ”

At the time, Dr. Ross was still very much the skeptic when it came to such things. “I didn’t believe in all that stuff,” she expresses her attitude at the time of the encounter with Mrs. Schwartz.

Needless to say, Dr. Kübler-Ross would continue her work with the dying and would come to believe in a spirit world, becoming one of the world’s foremost authorities on death and dying.

“Death is simply a shedding of the physical body like the butterfly shedding its cocoon,” she wrote. “It is a transition to a higher state of consciousness where you continue to perceive, to understand, to laugh, and to be able to grow.”

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