
EXPERIENCES

Vision of an angel

During the night of 17th June 2002 I wake up as my wife Margret comes to my bedroom, and tells me excited and happy that an angel has just appeared to her. We have had separate bedrooms and bathrooms for many years, as we usually have different sleeping hours and I tend to snore. She tells me that she was asleep in her

bedroom when she woke up lying on her back and was quite awake. She has a wide double bed and always sleeps on the right side of it. She turns in bed to lie on her left side. Then she sees an angel on the other side of the bed. He is kind of half lying down so that she sees him "upright" although she is lying down. He has a beautiful face and smiles very lovingly to her. Marget tells me that the angel looked more male

than female, but somehow she immediately recognises him as an angel and not a human being. She sees his face and the upper part of his body quite close to her and perceives him very clearly for a few seconds. She is not aware of his having wings [I asked about that]. Then she moves and takes her eyes off him. She believes she might have called my name in her astonishment at this vision. When she looks back at him, he has disappeared. She then walks over to my bedroom and tells me about her experience.

Margret has often been sick during the last few years. First she broke her hip, then she had a heart problem, and she has twice suffered a minor stroke and lost her speech for a day on both occasions. She has been hospitalized three times, but in her period of poor health she has not experienced any hallucination.

In the study of deathbed visions (hallucinatory experiences of terminal patients) that I conducted with Karlis Osis, angels and other religious beings figure significantly and the patient often died soon after such an experience, sometimes almost immediately thereafter (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977). This came to mind when Margret told me of her vision and I wondered what might soon happen. Nothing happened during the day that followed. Being concerned, in the evening I decide to sleep in her bedroom in case something might happen. Around three in the night I wake up as I hear her shouting my name from her bathroom. I immediately run to her, she is sitting on the WC and tells me she is very sick. Barely has she said that when she gets cramps and falls into coma. I wait a few moments in the hope that she might regain consciousness, but when she does not I carry her to her bed. Then she is absolutely unconscious and limp.

Soon a physician comes and examines her and she is brought to the hospital. She remains in coma but in one or two hours time she begins to react to pain (such as injections) but no communication with her is possible and she in no way responds to questions. For a while it seems likely that she has suffered another stroke, but then a blood sample reveals that she has extremely high blood sugar and her coma might be due to diabetes that had not been diagnosed earlier. Her condition is very critical. She remains in coma until 5:30 in the afternoon when at last she regains consciousness and we can speak to her. Her coma has then lasted for

more than 14 hours. She slowly regained strength, the blood sugar level came down and a week later she was fit enough to be discharged from the hospital.

I have asked myself; what was the role of the experience of the angel? In our deathbed-vision survey patients usually did not experience a vision of an angel or a deceased relative as a warning but rather seemed to welcome the experience, as there often was in the experience an understanding or an explicit statement that these figures were there to "take the patient away"; and the patient died quickly or soon thereafter. For an observer with knowledge of deathbed-visions such an experience was likely to indicate that death was near. Unfortunately we do not know how common such experiences are among non-terminal patients, but apparently they are much less frequent.

If Margret had not had her vision I would not have slept in her bedroom that night. She would have fallen into a coma, perhaps hurt herself as she fell on the hard tiled floor in her bathroom and would have lain there until 8:30 or 9 o'clock the following morning, or almost six hours, lightly dressed on the cold floor and without any help. At this time I leave for work and always look into her bedroom to see if she is all right. Usually she is asleep at that time.

Could this experience have been a hallucination because of her as-yet undiagnosed diabetes II? If so, why was it of an angel and not of something else? Was it a warning to me of an upcoming danger that might occur to my wife, a kind of an apparition of the bystander type (Haraldsson, 1987), and hence rather meant for me as a warning than for Margret? Was it an indication of how close Margret was to death at that time, and perhaps a sign that someone was there to receive her (possibly with a greater meaning for her immediately after she would actually have passed over)? And finally, was this just one of these odd coincidences? Intuitively the last explanation seems unconvincing to me.

I found no indication of any confusion in her in the morning that she told me about her experience, or the whole day that followed, but some light confusion as we spoke to each other in bed just before we fell asleep.

I have asked Margret why she thought that the figure was an angel and not perhaps a deceased person. She told me that she simply immediately knew that this was an angel. There

was never any doubt of that. There was something so otherworldly about him; he was so beautiful, and different from people, also neither young nor old. He looked at her with great warmth and she felt he knew how she was and felt. There was so much kindness in his face.

I wrote up this account a few days after the incident and sent it to some friends a few months later. These are the comments of two of them:

Some may say the experience was one of those subliminal messages Myers and others wrote about. Maybe her mind knew something was wrong and sent a message as an hallucination. This is of course a speculation.

The angel may have appeared to herald "taking her away", which might have happened, had you not behaved as you did (due to your own knowledge of such appearances). To me, the entire episode is need-serving, and it served the needs of Margret and of you. It also points to a clear indication of the possible practical power and

extreme usefulness of work in psychical research and the value of being knowledgeable about such things as apparitions and visions.

What was the meaning of this experience for Margret? I asked her on more than one occasion about this. Her answer was that she did not know but felt that it was very good that the angel came to her. To her this experience, which she valued highly, did not have any specific meaning. I know that she was not aware that it might herald a danger of any kind.

About two years later Margret passed away peacefully after suffering a severe stroke two months previously.

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References

- Haraldsson, E. (1987). The Iyengar-Kirti case. An apparitional case of the by-stander type. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 54, 64-67.
- Osis, K., & Haraldsson, E. (1977). *At the hour of death*. New York: Avon Books.