

# **Near Death Experiences and the Multilevel Interdisciplinary Paradigm: The Approach to Psychological Synthesis**

**11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | January 8, 2016 (Friday)**

**CPD-2.42, Central Podium Level | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong**



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### **Abstract**

In a combined ethnographic and experimental study of people in the International Association of Near Death Studies (IANDS), phenomenological questions about consciousness, spirituality, and afterlife were gauged with both quantitative and qualitative methods including interviews, participant observation, analysis of personal texts, and conversations. The quantitative methods included experiments, self-administered measures, and correlational analyses. These methods illuminated the attributional processes involved in how the IANDS members identify ordinary events as spiritually important. Persons involved in near-death experience (NDE) groups often attribute “proof of an afterlife” as the meaning of NDEs. Phenomenological research revealed that the target population made meaningful associations between random or coincidental events and that they understand these associations as evidence for the presence of spirits (of deceased persons) or Spirit (as some transcendent force). One message of such research is that humans are constituted such that their systems strain to see wholes where there are parts, to make meaning out of ambiguity. The biggest ambiguity of all, at any level, is death. Many people claim to know what happens after death. But nobody knows, although there are many religious and spiritual beliefs about it. We should understand the difference between knowing and believing.

### **About the Speaker**

Raymond F. Paloutzian received his Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School and is Professor Emeritus of experimental and social psychology at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California. He has been a visiting professor at Stanford University and the Faculty of Psychology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. His books include *Invitation to the Psychology of Religion* (3rd ed. 2016, Guilford), *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Psychological Pathways to Conflict Transformation and Peace Building* (Springer, 2009/2010 paper, co-edited with Ani Kalayjian), and the *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 2nd ed. (Guilford, 2013, co-edited with Crystal Park). He is editor of *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* and consultant in the Religion, Experience, and Mind Lab Group at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**~All are Welcome~**