Like any rational, educated person, I believe in electromagnetic radiation. And, because I believe in electromagnetic radiation, I also believe in the indestructible nature of the human soul.

Listen:

The beating of our hearts is a relatively major electrical event--if you've ever had an EKG at a hospital, that's what they're measuring: the change in voltage potential across your skin caused by the depolarization and repolarization of your beating heart. Any time an electrical current is moving, a magnetic field is created. When a current pulses--as does the current in a radio broadcast antenna, or the electrochemical action potential that makes my heart beat 60-odd times per minute--the field it creates radiates out in a regular pattern of waves. This field (which, owing to how the voltage propagates across the heart, is torus shaped--like a donut--with the heart at its center) is at its peak within a three foot radius and, like all electromagnetic fields, influences other such fields and electrical events. For example, when a mother holds a baby, the baby's and mother's hearts go into entrainment; this can be seen on an EKG: the waveforms reflecting their two heartbeats synchronize. As they go into entrainment they tend to slow and mellow:
Peace.

This is part of what "love" is, what we mean when we say the word: the electromagnetic signatures of the core function of our bodies influence each other, and match up, and we feel it, and we're at peace.

Electromagnetic waves never stop; they expand infinitely out in all directions from their center. When I'm too far from a station to receive their broadcast, it isn't that I'm too far for the waves to reach me, but rather that once the waves get to me they are too diffuse for my crummy little radio to pick up. But the waves are there, still expanding, still heading out, forever.

I think about this when I think about people who it pains me to imagine losing. Yes, maybe they die, maybe they stop transmitting here and now, but the frequency of their love still propagates, ever farther out past the Moon and the Sun and Mars, past the edge of everything known and knowable. And, once a circle gets big enough, once it encompasses Jupiter or the Oort Cloud or the next nearest star then, just being on earth, I'm more or less at the center of it, at the center of the signature of their heart, at the origin of the electromagnetic field that gave me succor, that was the core physical manifestation of how it felt to be with them. I can remember them, what they said and did and knew; what I miss when I miss someone is how it felt to be with them. But that feeling is still there, farther out, moving, taking in more of the Universe every second.

Just because I can't pick up the signal doesn't mean it's gone. Nothing is ever gone.

I am a doubting Jew; we are a people who, in terms of dogma, have many theories about what dreams may come, but no conclusive claims as to the nature of the afterlife. I am secretly jealous of my wife's family, who are Catholic: at her grandfather's funeral they were all promised
eternal life in Heaven, and I envied them, because they could believe and accept this offer, and I could not.

But at night, when we breath deeply and slowly, I hold my wife in my arms and our hearts go into entrainment, and the combined, synchronized waveform, the electromagnetic excitation, propagates out forever with us as its center. And, as it heads out, it takes in our dog and our friends and our family, it takes in soldiers who believe they are dying to protect our freedom and suicide bombers who believe they are dying to stop our imperialism, it takes in tiny waves building toward tsunami and silent islands that have never know a human footprint, and a lonely flag on the moon, and everything.

Knowing this gives me a great deal of comfort. This is how I begin to understand Heaven.

published in Poor Mojo's Almanac(k), December 2006