

The Out-of-Body Experience: A Personal Account

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That brings back a lot of memories and experiences. I'm going to summarize some of my experiences at a metaphysical school in England, Claregate College, some of my personal inner experiences, and how these relate to the OBE and lucid dreaming.

Coming to Detroit, out of an era where fast cars and money were the dream, I traveled to Potter's Bar England to turn inwardly. At Claregate College, the director Dr. Douglas Baker, told me that the most important objective of his program was to turn inwardly and record all of one's dreams and subjective experiences. We were to try and understand how purpose and meaning in life were being reflected in a continuous and unconscious inner process. We did many exercises and read many different philosophies to make us more consciously aware, therefore better able to directly observe, our own unconscious processes.

I recorded my subjective experiences and began practicing many variations of meditation. The theme of the school was centered around the Theosophical philosophy which postulates a soul, a reincarnation, karma and the manifestation of the soul through different bodies. A body which one could become just as aware of as one's own physical body was the astral or dream body. Just as we had acting consciousness and volition in this outer world with our physical bodies, we could also have acting consciousness and volition in the astral world with our dream body. In essence, the goal of the Claregate methodology was to make one more aware in total, thereby increasing one's self understanding, not only of one's ego, but of one's unconscious.

The methodology worked at evoking a myriad of inner experiences, hypnogogic and hypnopompic imagery, long elaborate vivid dreams, moments of profound revery, etc. The Claregate method was functional. In two months, I was trying to integrate some meditative techniques with dream recall techniques that Dr. Baker had outlined. One night I was trying to synchronize my breathing with my heart rate, and I felt myself falling out of my body. There was no visual experience, I was just falling, and it felt as if I was falling out of my body. While I experienced this, vibrational feelings surged through me and I heard a booming voice say "give your brother a credit card" It was my father's voice.

Psychological significance aside, the perceptual sensation associated with this experience was that of leaving my physical body with another body that had full volition and self reflective consciousness. Dr. Baker referred to this as astral projection with consciousness, and OBE.

Having mastered some techniques for exploring in-wardly, I left Claregate College in England and came back to the United States. I went to the University of Texas at Austin, enrolled in the psychology program, and quickly became involved in a sleep and dream study. I was still functionally appreciating my dreams as astral projections. In all of my dreams, I just assumed I was in another world with another body. Whether or not I was indeed out of body with another body, or inside my head was not important, for I could function with a body in both inner and outer worlds. Functionally, it was easier to look at everything as another world, than to try and postulate how it could be happening in my own head. In the sleep laboratory I began to have some conscious inner experiences and they were occurring during REM sleep. I will comment about the physiology later in the day.

I began to question the discrepancies between scientific evidence of REM sleep being a brain stem phenomenon and my experience of volition and consciousness during this supposedly primitive state. How could something so real, so full of volition and sensations not be another world? I was satisfied the laboratory evidence showed a REM sleep process, but the fact remained that in order to function successfully in this inner world, I wouldn't say to myself that this is a dream, but I would just intuit a world different from the outer world. A kind of reflex intuition discriminating inner from outer worlds.

These experiences, whether lucid dreaming, leaving ones body, or astral projection, functionally and subjectively require the perceptual experience of an inner body, and objectively require a REM sleep state with a sleeping physical body. What the truth of these experiences really is will always be open to interpretation, but with a definition of perception of an inner body during a REM sleep state, we can establish a working model by which to further investigate and increase our understanding of the human mind.

One of my most vivid OBE's was after the death of a loved one two years ago. At the time I happened to be reading Robert Monroe's *Journeys Out of the Body* and was practicing some of his techniques. While lying in bed I had a very powerful vibration or energy sensation, rotated my dream body 180 degrees, sat up, looked around my parents bed room where I slept, and observed the surroundings with full awareness. Everything was the same except the color of the sheet and the body underneath it in the bed. I threw back the sheet and found a body lying there as if dead, but this body was me! This other me stood out of bed and grabbed my arms and struggled and shook me. I broke away and walked about this inner imaged house shocked at my encounter with my mortality. When I awakened, even though saddened, this profound inner experience helped me feel serene and warm in some mysterious way, about the experience of death.

In summary, I find the OBE or lucid dream to be a very vivid inner experience

with full awareness and volition during a REM sleep state. The experience of this state allows for gaining much insight into oneself and can be increased by the following:

1. Writing down ones dreams and subjective experiences and reflecting on them.
2. Becoming self reflective of outer experiences, and incorporating this self reflectiveness to inner experiences while they happen.
3. Reading and practicing many different techniques and philosophies of becoming lucid inwardly.
- 4.. Continue using the techniques which help you in your life and stimulate your inner growth and satisfaction.

I would like to close with a saying from Claregate College which summarizes my feelings:

“Not that we must live in this world less,
but we must live in both worlds more”.