



The Relationship Between The Out-Of-Body Experience and Lucid Dreaming: A Personal Account

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Let me begin with a brief abstract, followed by a full description of a personal experience that I think might bring out some of the problems and issues in the definitions of lucid dreams and out-of-the-body experiences (OBEs). The experience entailed a series of OBEs in which I was not only aware that I was having an OBE, and thus aware I was dreaming, but also I had full control of the onset, duration, and the end, or that is, the return to the body, of each OBE. I was also aware of my sleeping body's position. However, in the continuing transition in and out of my body in the series of OBEs, I felt that my real body might actually be floating at times or doing something abnormal or, perhaps, paranormal. Thus, I wanted to contact the outside world (in this case it was a housemate) to verify if in fact I was floating in the world of the waking state. This effort to reach the outside world induced a transitional state in which I wavered between something like waking and sleeping consciousness.

Now here are the details. I had just come back from the movie "Poltergeist." One particular scene in "Poltergeist" became central to my experience. This was the scene where "forces" from some other dimension were going in and out of a large TV screen. It drew into the TV and then blew out with a power that burned holes in the walls and so forth. Apparently I had this on my mind somewhere when I retired for the night. Another preliminary detail was that it was too hot to sleep in my upstairs bedroom on this particular hot summer night, so I decided to sleep downstairs in the living room on the floor where it was cooler. I laid on my back with a light sheet over me. A very large stereo speaker was set behind me, right behind my head, but at an angle; that's an important detail.

After going to sleep I became aware of the cover over my chest, or at least I dreamt awareness of it, and of my right hand grasping it and pushing it down, probably because I was feeling hot. As I did so, I felt my body being sucked toward the speaker. I didn't make the connection in the dream between the force sucking me into the speaker and the force drawing into the TV screen in the movie, "Poltergeist." My "suction" toward the speaker was at an angle, as I said, because the speaker wasn't directly behind me. Due to that angle, I felt I was beginning to spin or go into a rotation. Once the rotation began the impetus or inertia would allow the rotating to continue past the speaker. At the perception of my body spinning toward the speaker, I could feel my body differently. I felt it as very light and easily spun or drawn toward this speaker, or hole, or force. With this perception of being sucked into a spinning action, combined with a feeling of the body being drawn out of the head of my real body (which I was aware or cognizant of on the floor, motionless), I recognized that in fact it was not my real body that was being pulled but rather a second body, or "out-of-the-body" body.

In other words, I had what seemed to be the onset of something lucid. I knew that I was having an OBE, that I was in a dream or sleep state, and that when I moved my hand down with the sheet (or dreamt that I was moving it down), an OBE would begin - I'd begin to leave my body, being "sucked" towards the speaker and rotating. If I pulled up the sheet, I could get "sucked" from the other direction back into my body. I thought this was marvelous. It was as though a cocoon was formed by the sheet on top of me, and perhaps that cocoon somehow symbolized my real body and that by pushing the sheet down I was coming out of the cocoon. Perhaps that image contributed to the induction of the experience. Do you see the parallel?

This all occurred very quickly as I began to spin past the speaker and then pull the sheet up (i.e., "feel" I was pulling it up) and feel myself drawn back into the body. I could feel a sudden impact of heaviness all over my body, or course, when I "re-entered" or returned to my body. I would then push the sheet down again, and be pulled out of my body by "the force" from the speaker and rotated on some kind of axis. I executed this back and forth, or in and out, control of the OBE via my "OBE-on and OBE-off" switch (pushing or pulling on the sheet) during a period of delightful experimentation.

That there was some kind of force from the speaker was certainly odd, but I wasn't concerned or frightened by the idea. I didn't associate the experience with the movie and fear, oh my God, this is the beginning of another Poltergeist! I was wholly enthralled by the sensation of moving from a "dead," real body of sleep - weight to this floating and rotating body and by the control I had over it. I continued my moving in and out of my body with the "hand switch," as it were, exploring how much hand movement was required for inducing on OBE, or beginning one, and how fast I entered and exited, or, in other words, how fast I perceived my body as moving. I observed and investigated the phenomenology of the experience. I tried to keep tabs on the various changes of body sensation as well. At first, I returned to my body shortly after beginning to spin toward the speaker. But finally, I decided to venture a full or complete 360 degree spin or two, and I did, managing to let myself out of my body and to spin completely around. I discovered that I could spin fairly rapidly and yet still return to my body by pulling my hand up.

At that moment I thought to myself, "Well, I know this is a subjective experience, because it's an OBE during sleep, yet on the other hand, it's pretty darn realistic and extremely vivid. Also, I'm so aware and in control - thus, I must try to get objective verification of this! After all, I'm a scientist!" So I decided to make contact with an observer from "normal-everyday-awake reality" or consciousness, and the only available person was my housemate, who was upstairs in her room. "Could any of these things that are happening to me be seen, observed objectively?" I wondered. I tried to call her to come down and watch me "spin" out of my body. If I could get her downstairs, I figured, I would immediately perform a spin or two for her to learn if she'd see me just laying there or if she would witness something paranormal. I was very aware of my entire circumstance: "look, you're having this weird series of OBEs, but you're in a dream, and one doesn't see another's dream experiences if they're standing there watching. Yet what you're experiencing is extraordinarily vivid! Maybe, you'd better check!"

Now began the second part of the whole episode. This part involved trying to contact the outer world. I needed to try to get my housemate downstairs as quickly as possible, because I was aware that the more I tried to call, that is, the longer that I focused on, or attended to, calling, the more likely I was to come out of that dream - sleep state, and the more likely I was to lose contact with the "OBE switch." I decided to try to call her, but to also try to remain in this dream or OBE state by focusing on my hand. At the slightest sense that I was losing contact with the dream state, I would focus back on my hand and move it, to "re-contact" the moving in and out of the body. In that way I could retain both the dream state and the state required to call out to her.

When I did try to call her, you can imagine what came out; "ooooohhhh!" I couldn't form a word, but I heard my own groan. In my mind, of course, I heard the formation of her name, Dana, but I was well aware that I couldn't get it out. "That really

confirms that you're asleep," I thought, "but you must try harder, and you must be careful. If you succeed in forming a word, that will probably mean that you've reached a certain level of consciousness, and you could lose this dream - OBE state and control." I tried to make the sounds louder and to shape them into her name, but always returned to the "switch."

Suddenly, at some point when I was listening to the outside world to hear if she was awake (her bedroom was just above me), I heard a creaking in her bed. It sounded as if she had just sat up, startled, which in fact was occurring as I later learned. I quickly called out again: "ooooohhhh!" She heard me and was indeed startled. She thought I was being strangled down in the living room! Unfortunately, this thought paralyzed her and caused her to hesitate! Hearing her awaken and sit up in bed, but not rush down to me, drove me crazy, because I didn't think I would be able to sustain one foot in waking consciousness (calling, hearing my own groans and her movements) and one foot in sleep and the OBE states for very long. Eventually she started to come towards the staircase, but only very slowly. The floor upstairs was creaky and I could hear each footstep clearly. "She's taking forever!" I thought. I spun a bit, returned to my body and then tried again to call to her more urgently. I knew I was asleep and yet I could hear and think about her and try to contact her. This seemed most unusual and was a rather difficult process.

She crept down the stairs. I was aware of everything she was doing, of each point where she stopped at the stairs to listen for an attacker struggling with the strangling me. I was aware of her saying at one point, "Patric, Patric?!" I also heard some beer drinkers outside the window put down 3 beer cans. I mention this event that was later verified to illustrate the degree to which I was conscious of the outside world. Finally, I felt that this was ridiculous and that I wasn't getting anywhere. I reconciled that I would have to try to pronounce her name clearly, because she was simply not coming down fast enough! In a burst, I pushed with all of my energy, knowing that I better hold only that hand mechanism, and just at that moment, as I was about to call out in my greatest effort, she reached the bottom of the stairs, entered the living room and turned on the light: "Patric?!" she called and startled me at her proximity. And then suddenly, as if holding a delicate vase rather clumsily and dropping it inadvertently when startled, I "dropped" my delicate contact with the hand "switch" and my dream-OBE state. I had lost an unusually lucid control of a dream or OBE state with which, simultaneously, I had had direct contact with the waking world and ordinary consciousness. Yet, in that instance, I had the unusual opportunity to experience fully the transitional terrain between my awareness of the outside world (her coming down the steps, the beer drinkers, and so forth), and my awareness of, and participation in, the dream world. All I could do was gasp: "My God, why did you take so long?"