

Psychotechnology of subjective light as threshold to out-of-the-body-experience

Hugo B. J. Soder, Moscow 2001

Abstract :

The subjective light, also called phosphene, is the multi-colored luminous spot resulting of the dazzling effect, which follows the observation of any source of bright light. As a physiological process, this subjective light can be easily obtained and reproduced through the adequate experimental protocol.

The Out-of-the-Body-Experience (O.B.E.) is characterized mainly by two factors:

A) The self-evident feeling of existing out of one's physical body.

B) The possibility of obtaining normally (and physically) non-accessible information.

Quality of factor A depends of the presence of a frame of reference for the experimenter's mind and also of a safe and comfortable physical environment. Quality of factor B is directly dependent of the richness and vividness of the virtual field of vision.

In order to induce an Out-of-the-Body-Experience, the subjective light will be used as a "visual seed" for producing an after-image, basis of the experimenter's perceptual frame of reference. The carefully control of the experimenter's psycho-physiological environment (i.e. by using a multimedia relaxation chair) makes possible to reduce the external disturbances and dramatically improves and facilitates the Out-of-the-Body-Experience.

What is an Out-of-the-Body Experience, or O.B.E.?

In her book "Beyond the body, an investigation of out-of-the-body experiences", Suzan J. Blackmore proposes the following definition:

"An O.B.E can initially be defined as an experience in which a person seems to perceive the world from a location outside his physical body".

This definition acknowledges in its own formulation the differentiation between the subject "a person" and the object "his physical body" for allowing "to perceive the world from a location outside the physical body".

There is there a possibility of dissociation so that the consciousness or the ego is no more localized strictly inside the body.

This meaning is well adequate as it implies that the frame of reference of the ego has shift from the physical location of the body towards a wider environment.

While accepting this definition, we also have to accept to reconsider our relationship with the world.

We open up to a relationship of exploration and discoveries that can achieve itself at a level free of the constraints of physical body, not to say free of the constraints of physics.

The limitations and weakness of our body have finally stopped filtering our relationship with the world.

The Man's consciousness preexists to his physical shape. Being capable to detach himself from his body, he can exist therefore outside of it, in its absence and even after its disappearance.

The O.B.E. is a real initiation. Its effect of evolutionary transformation of the Human Being takes place by a definitive and liberating consciousness rising.

This experience clarifies the apparent paradox illustrated by the word "ecstasy" in its Greek original meaning, as "the action to be out of oneself". Indeed it seems impossible to exist outside of oneself, the subject being outside of the subject, as long as subsists the conviction of identification of the self with the physical body.

Once experienced, the O.B.E. appears like evidence. It is felt like a liberating return to the essential. As Celia Green reports, after having analyzed hundreds of O.B.E.: "One of the main things I found, was that a person in an out-of-body state feels more real, not less real or unreal."

Henceforth we should ask: "Do we normally seem to perceive the world from inside our body and is this an In-the-body experience?"

Right now you can feel yourself having an in-the-body experience by trying to localize your ego somewhere inside your body. Most of us will feel being inside the head, exactly behind the eyes. As a driver inside his vehicle, looking through the windshield.

This sensation In-the-body seems now a little odd, restrictive and vaguely troubling. It is like a light claustrophobia that one doesn't really want to analyze. All as if one felt trapped in the physical world and totally at its mercy.

The man has always longed for liberty. But this affirmation must not be understood in its most literal sense. It is not about possessing a liberty of simple physical action, but rather to possess a capacity of action based on the free access to information and knowledge. It is about a liberty of ability and power.

To illustrate this liberty of power, the Belgian novelist Jean Ray makes the Devil tell: "My strength is great. To cut the sun in two parts and to crush the moon, to pulverize the world... I know that I can do it and it is sufficient to me!"

In 1975 Joseph McMoneagle was recruited as a psychic within a secret American military program to develop and apply remote viewing for national security purposes. For twenty years he refined this method of information retrieval. In his book "Mind trek" he states:

“Some will argue that the mind resides in the brain because that is where some believe we store all the information we know. However, as a remote viewer, I will categorically state that is not necessarily true. I collect, analyze and report information every day that I have never read, seen or known prior to the experiment. It would seem that my mind is collecting it from somewhere. The mass of cerebral cells between my ears is the last place I think I would be looking for that information. No...there is a somewhere else, and our minds not only have access to it, but may in fact reside within it.”

This example illustrates the importance of the O.B.E. as a new way to get information.

When involuntary, the O.B.E. is almost always associated to a critical state of the organism. For example: a violent traumatism, bound to a physical shock, a general weakening due to an illness, a violent pain, a big tiredness or an emotional stress.

Voluntary inductions can be active. They generally require techniques or rituals that have a similar action on the organism as what provokes the involuntary O.B.E's.

The passive inductions use hypnosis or hallucinogenic chemical substances. These experiences are rather difficult to master.

Another type of induction, that one could call semi-passive, remains perfectly controllable. It regroups several techniques in the following order:

- The intention.
- The relaxation.
- The concentration.
- The visualization.
- The O.B.E.

Once the intention established, it becomes possible to simplify this process by using the hypnagogic state.

The hypnagogic state is commonly known as the state before falling asleep. In the common hypnagogic state several brain functions decrease, such as logical thinking and the remembrance of the actions of the past day. A frequent characteristic is the occurrence of short dreams lasting only one or few seconds.

These short dreams are frequently of the type of "calming pictures" They serve to remove inner obstacles, such as problems left over from the day, which would otherwise have "alarm quality" and, as such, be nonconductive to sleep.

They may be remembered as a series of seemingly disconnected dreams. In many cases they may not be recalled at all. Here is an example from Alfred Ballabene's personal experiences:

"Already tired and lying in bed I recalled the events of the evening and I got uncertain, if my car was locked. Suddenly I saw my car on the street side and a policeman standing aside. My fear vanished."

To achieve an O.B.E. induced by hypnagogic state, the continuous chain of thoughts, on which the short dreams are based, has to vanish and be replaced by an alert observation without getting personally and emotionally involved.

By doing this you can observe pictures, getting more and more colorful with deeper states. These pictures are comparable to the short dreams, but more static, though still changing as in a slide show. If you see landscapes, they are passing as if you were sitting in a car. In order to enter an OBE you have to stop this "movie" or "slide show" and arrest the pictures.

The OBE's following the hypnagogic state cannot be interpreted as a continuation of the hypnagogic state. The OBE's are as distinctly different from the hypnagogic state as sleep is different from the hypnagogic state.

The following example reported by Alfred Ballabene demonstrates in which way and how abruptly the hypnagogic state can change to a completely different form of consciousness:

"Once while staying in my bed with my eyes closed, a sheet of newspaper appeared in my inner visual field. I was very curious to read what information was written in this "inner newspaper" when parts of the columns vanished.

Keeping my concentration on the rest of written information, the whole newspaper suddenly disappeared and instead I stood on a bridge in the center of a park.

I stood there with full body awareness and everything seemed real. Down at the bridge were flowers on both sides of the way and behind them trees. It was fascinatingly real.

I moved a few steps, when suddenly everything changed again and I found myself lying awake in the bed."

The visual perceptions in the hypnagogic state can be classified into four main groups and each of these groups can be used as a starting point for visualization:

When you see unstructured colors or mosaics:

Do nothing except looking actively at the colors in order to hold your level of consciousness and awareness. Try to change the mosaics into a curtain, which you can open afterwards to step into an OBE-landscape.

When you see spots of light or foggy shapes:

Try to change them into landscapes in the dawn and make them more colorful afterwards. Try to form the fog into a circle, which you try to change into a tunnel.

When you see structured pictures in the form of objects:

Try to purposely select suggestive objects, which you can use as doors to OBE-landscapes; for instance, doors, windows, tunnels or paths.

When you see landscapes:

Try to make them tri-dimensional and focus on your presence in the landscape and your body sensations.

Most of the methods traditionally used to induce O.B.E's imply visualization. A virtual image, carefully built in one's mind will evolve to an independent self-existent vision, into which the ego will be immersed. Then the "bubble of consciousness" will freely travel across this environment.

So, when you try to imagine the process of an O.B.E. you imagine your ego shifting from your forehead to the external environment. Then you need a new frame of reference and as our sense of vision overcomes all our other senses, this new frame of reference will first be visual.

We have seen that the voluntary induction of an O.B.E. requires many efforts. Even if we try to simplify the process, a long and difficult practice is necessary to reach the level where visualization becomes usable to achieve the O.B.E.

When we go back to the list of the successive techniques of induction:

The intention.
The relaxation.
The concentration.
The visualization.
The O.B.E.

We notice that the degree of difficulty is progressive. If the intention is relatively easy to get, it is quite different with the visualization, which demands so many efforts, that they can even disrupt the process just because of the mental tension.

Now we are going to examine a physiological phenomenon for creating mental images. This automatic physiological process forms a multi-colored luminous spot called phosphene, after image or subjective light.

There are different ways to produce phosphenes:

The after images following a dazzling effect by any source of light.

The phosphenes observed after rubbing the eyes or after a shock on the head, also called phosphenes by compression.

The phosphenes produced by electrical stimulation of the brain.

We will consider here only the first category: the phosphenes related to the observation of a light. The well-known example is the dazzle of the sun or the flash of a camera.

When they are involuntary, these experiences are rather unpleasant; we all tend to avoid them or to get rid, as soon as possible, of these colored parasites disturbing our field of vision.

In experimental protocols, the phosphene is produced by a carefully controlled observation of an electrical light source. The light of a halogen fifty watts DC bulb, filtered by a white silicate glass is turned on gradually during ten seconds and observed during twenty seconds at a distance of one meter, then the light is switched off.

This after image is called post-phosphene, meaning consecutive to lighting. It stays visible during about three minutes with the eyes opened or closed. Total darkness in the room gives of course better result for exploratory observation.

The shape of the phosphene is directly related to the shape of the light source. If the bulb is spherical, the after image will appear like a disc. If a triangular filter is placed in front of the bulb, the phosphene will look triangular.

When the light is off, the phosphene tends to move in apparently irregular movements, changes of colors, becomes darker and darker, then appears darker than its surrounding and gradually vanishes. It leaves finally a pale glimmer on the visual field, during about one more minute. This glimmer looks like a greenish cloud of a much bigger size than the phosphene.

During the first observations, it is necessary to become familiar with the experience and for example, to learn how to stabilize the after image. This happens with a simple act of will, by deciding to "bring back" the phosphene towards the center of the visual field. In daylight, with opened eyes, one could project deliberately the phosphene on an element of the visible surrounding and try to maintain it on this position before it vanishes.

The colors of the phosphene change during the observation. Green and red are generally visible during the first minute, and then the colors darken and loose their importance. The phosphene becomes an object quite distinct from the visual field. The mind tends spontaneously to focus on it and automatically concentrates on the observation of its variations of shape and color.

This process induces easily a light trance, characterized by quite vivid visions appearing inside and around the phosphene. These visions seem to originate from the after image and can last much longer than the observation of the phosphene itself.

We see here that the phosphene is a real seed for producing mental images.

It allows in three minutes and without particular effort to get the same kind of pictures than those visible during the hypnagogic state. The difference is however important since the phosphene is a physiological process that can be trigger and controlled at will.

So we notice that our list of induction techniques has shortened.

The intention.

The relaxation.

The phosphene.

The O.B.E.

Relaxation will be the last technique that we are going to facilitate.

In his extensive study of the effects of sensory deprivation, John P. Zubeck states that:

“In sensory deprivation condition, as one loses contact with external reality, external and internal sensations are confused, there is an increase in imaginative thinking and a disorientation as to time and space. Experiences of being somewhere other than in the body are often reported in these circumstances. Experiments in sensory deprivation demonstrate how dependent waking consciousness is on external stimulation in order to define body image and conscious ego.

Sensory deprivation is a universal experience in one form or another. However it is experienced most of the time under negative or hard circumstances as confinement in bomb shelter, entrapment in mines or caves, shipwrecked crews, lost explorers, prisoners in solitary confinement, self-exiled recluses or mystics.”

Similarly to the unpleasant experience of the involuntary dazzle that can be changed into mental pictures, the sensory deprivation can be adapted in a soft version that will even suit to claustrophobic people.

This soft version is called sensory protection.

Its principle of action requires psychotechnological solutions. First a protective shell is created around the subject. It materializes in the space the limits of our intimacy zone that surround us permanently.

This zone of intimacy is supervised continually by our subconscious that acts exactly like a watchdog, looking day and night after our security. This surveillance allows us for example to avoid a flowerpot falling from a balcony, without having discerned it consciously.

This uninterrupted process of surveillance mobilizes a considerable energy, which immediately stops to be demanded as soon as one gets inside a sensory protective shell. This effect is felt like a sudden immersion in deep relaxation.

The sensory protection acts also as a filter for the outside stimulations in order to create an undisturbed neutral environment. It can be used either in a passive manner, just like an ideal relaxation place, or more actively by introducing inside some carefully chosen and controlled sensory stimulations, as music, light, colors and so on.

In 1999 I invented the Multimedia Relaxation Chair, a new psychotechnological device that applies the principle of sensory protection by offering a welcoming protected space, perfectly adapted to its occupant.

The chair itself is simple: a semi-spherical piece forms the bottom, where you sit, and another semi spherical piece rests overhead. This top part can be lowered to create a complete bubble of privacy, shielding all but your legs from the outside world. This chair is called "multimedia" because it can be equipped with stimulation generators as a computer screen and a sound system.

Its conception is based on the recognition and the respect of human physiological proportions. Its shape, its proportions and components have been studied to achieve a passive relaxation merely by sitting inside.

From now on, our process of voluntary induction of O.B.E's appears as follows:

The intention.

The relaxation aboard a Multimedia Relaxation Chair.

The visualization of pictures produced with phosphenes.

The passage to O.B.E.

With the use of psycho-physiological factors and technical help to induce automatically relaxation and mental imagery, we have considerably facilitated and simplified the access to the O.B.E.S.

Nevertheless the intention still remains.

An intense will and a strong perseverance can lead to great success.

But here we have to be sure not to confound will and obsession. We need to avoid impatience, anxiety, frustration and all the blockages, which will delay and compromise the success of our experience.

The ideal intention is not to want to succeed at any price. At the contrary, the ideal intention consists in totally approving to accept the success of the experience, and then to let go for allowing its achievement.

Buddha got enlightenment just after having interrupted a long period of fasting and meditation, while he was quietly daydreaming under a tree.

References:

Suzan J. Blackmore: "Beyond the body, an investigation of out-of-the-body-experiences", 1982.

Celia Green: "Ecsomatic experiences and related phenomena", 1967.

Jean Ray: "Le carrousel des maléfices", 1964.

Joseph McMoneagle: "Mind trek", 1993.

Alfred Ballabene: "O.B.E. related phenomena", 1997.

John P. Zubeck: "Sensory deprivation, fifteen years of research", 1969.

Hugo B. J. Soder: "Multimedia relaxation chair", 1999.

© **Hugo B. J. Soder 2001**