

OBE Experiences and Survival After Death 2001

- Dr. Stephen Braude -

This paper originally appeared in the *International Journal of Parapsychology*: Volume 12, Number 1, 83-129. It is included on this website with the kind permission of Nancy L. Zingrone, editor of the IJP.

Readers are reminded that it is copyrighted by the Parapsychology Foundation, 2001. (ISSN: 0553-206X, New York, NY, USA). Please visit the PF website at: www.parapsychology.org

Abstract: Some people believe that out-of-body experiences (OBEs) provide at least indirect support for the survival hypothesis. They claim that OBEs show that the self, personality, or mind can operate apart from the body, which in turn shows that a human being is not merely a physical system. In that case (so the argument goes), we have a good reason to believe in survival of bodily death. This paper examines that line of reasoning in detail and argues that the OBE Argument is confused on a variety of important issues. The paper also considers, and rejects, the alleged relevance of apparitions (especially reciprocal apparitions) and of near-death experiences. **The author concludes that non-survivalist explanatory strategies are generally more compelling, especially those which appeal to phenomena, including ESP, whose existence and features have already been established.**

Introduction

PEOPLE HAVING out-of-body experiences (OBEs) feel as if they travel to, and (in most cases) observe the world from, locations outside the physical body. OBEs occur under a great variety of conditions, including ordinary waking states, times of relaxation, periods of crisis, physical trauma, and life-threatening events. Many of the latter cases are so-called near-death experiences (NDEs), but not every NDE is an OBE. Most OBEs are involuntary, although apparently some people can induce them at will. During the experience (which can last from seconds to more than an hour), subjects seem to have unusually clear but otherwise normal sense perceptions of their environment and physical body[1]. In many cases, they experience themselves as having a kind of secondary body (often called a *subtle, astral, or parasomatic body*). Some say this secondary body resembles the physical body, and some believe it to be infused throughout or located within the physical body. Moreover, OBEers often feel that their main consciousness is somehow centered within the secondary body, in roughly the same way as it seems to be located within the physical body during ordinary waking states. Therefore, when OBEers experience their secondary body as traveling sometimes considerable distances from their physical body, they experience their main consciousness as going along with it. In *veridical* OBEs, subjects acquire information about remote locations which they couldn't have gained through normal sense perception. And in *reciprocal* cases, people report seeing the OBEr at the site that person is ostensibly visiting.

[1] Although in the great majority of OBEs subjects apparently perceive the world from positions outside their bodies, some OBEs seem devoid of all perceptual content (see Irwin, 1985). But these rare cases needn't concern us here.

Not surprisingly, some believe that all OBEs are illusory. In their view, OBEs may be unusually vivid and personally compelling, but they reveal nothing more than our sometimes formidable psychological creativity. Others regard OBEs, especially veridical and reciprocal cases, as providing evidence, not of our imaginative capacities, but of psychic functioning. They claim that OBEs demonstrate the mind's ability to influence and gather information about distant events. Still others believe that OBEs support the survival hypothesis, at least indirectly. From their perspective, OBEs show that the self, personality, or mind can operate apart from the body, which in turn shows that a human being isn't merely a physical system. And in that case (so the argument goes), we have a good, if not coercive, reason to believe in survival of bodily death.

This last, survivalist, line of reasoning may be traced back to the early days of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR)[2]. But it still has adherents, and all along philosophers have taken the view quite

seriously (e.g., Broad, 1958/1976; 1962; Ducasse, 1961; Harrison, 1976; Huby, 1976; and, arguably, Geach, 1969). In fact, in recent years philosophers have been unusually attentive to the topic of OBEs and survival, most notably Almeder (1992), Griffin (1997), Paterson (1995), and Woodhouse (1994b). However, these latest participants in the debate disagree (perhaps even more than their predecessors) on the meaning of the evidence. Almeder regards OBEs as providing strong support for the survival hypothesis, whereas Woodhouse argues that it provides none. Griffin and (to a lesser extent) Paterson contend that the survival hypothesis is at least more probable in light of the evidence. Despite these differences, all four philosophers concur on (or at least raise) other important points that warrant our attention.

[2] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the phenomena in question weren't called out-of-body experiences. Rather, they were discussed under the headings of veridical phantasms, or traveling clairvoyance. See, for example, Myers, 1903, who, incidentally, was already describing some cases as "reciprocal."

The following passages express aspects of the position I want to examine.

During an OBE one *seems* to be feeling, perceiving, thinking, deciding, and acting while being apart from one's body, including one's brain. This experience gives strong *prima facie* support to the idea that, when the body dies, this core of the person will continue to experience. (Griffin, 1997, p. 230)

If out-of-the-body experiences ever give those who have them knowledge of the events they seem to witness from places in space outside their bodies, this weakens the claim that we are so tied to our bodies that our veridical perception is impossible without a suitable modification to our sense organs. It also strengthens the claim that such people were, in some sense or other, situated in a place outside their bodies, for this is the place from which they perceive. (Harrison, 1976, p. 112)

Obviously, if people can literally leave their bodies, then human personality is something distinct from the body itself. The person who leaves her or his body and then returns to it must be something more than just the very complex organism whose properties are revealed by physical science. Such a person would need to be some sort of non-physical being that lives *in* the body. (Almeder, 1992, p. 163)

It's clear, then, that thoughtful people have found it worthwhile to explore the possible connection between OBEs and survival, and so I propose that we take a close look at the issues. More specifically, I suggest that we examine systematically the survivalist position as it is sketched above. Even when we consider the argument for that view in what I believe is its most careful and plausible form, the connection between OBEs and survival turns out to be more tenuous than many have supposed. In fact, as in many philosophical journeys, what we find at the end of the road may be less momentous than what we discover *en route*.

The OBE Argument

Ordinarily, this would be an appropriate place to offer a more detailed description of the out-of-body experience. But at best, that would needlessly duplicate what others have done quite superbly, and in any case I imagine that most readers already have a general idea what OBEs are. Furthermore, I'll discuss and illustrate crucial features of OBEs as the paper progresses. Nevertheless, I encourage those who wish to brush up on the evidence to consult the excellent discussions by Almeder (1992), Griffin (1997), and (for the older cases) by Broad (1962). I also strongly recommend Gauld's (1982) brief (but characteristically thoughtful and astute) treatment of the evidence, Irwin's (1985) careful and scholarly treatise, and Alvarado's (2000) up-to-date review of the research literature.

Explanations of OBEs tend to divide into two broad classes. According to the first, consciousness is somehow physically separable from the body; the OBEr's mind or mental states are literally at the sites from which the OBEr seems to perceive. According to the second explanation, nothing of the sort happens; the experience of being outside the body is always illusory. Griffin, after more caveats than we can afford to survey, labels these options the *extrasomatic* and *intrasomatic* hypotheses. Woodhouse calls

them the *externalist* and *internalist* hypotheses. Because I find the latter terms somewhat more convenient, I'll follow Woodhouse in this matter.

Many, but not all, externalists adopt a view for which Broad imported the term "animism" (Broad, 1962). Behind this view is an intuition that many feel is too obvious to mention, and which most philosophers and scientists have held since antiquity. The intuition is that an individual's thoughts, feelings, and dispositional capacities can exist only so long as they are *grounded in*, or *supported by*, a kind of underlying substrate. Whatever that substrate turns out to be, it must (at the very least) enable our mental capacities and psychological characteristics to persist over time. For example, we assume that people have psychological attributes and traits even when those characteristics are not being expressed - for example, during periods of sleep or unconsciousness. Most believe this is possible only because these capacities and traits are somehow rooted in the body. (Of course, philosophers differ greatly over the question of to what that rooting relation amounts.) Some might think that this substrate has another essential feature as well - namely, that it allows us to express our mental states and capacities in something like the way the physical body does. But presumably that would be denied by (among others) those who accept reincarnation. They would say that although our capacities and memories persist in a substrate between incarnations, we need a physical body in order to express them. At any rate, it's a widespread (and generally unquestioned and unchallenged) intuition that mental states must be grounded in some kind of substrate if they are to exist and persist at all. So, if our mental capacities and traits can operate apart from the body and persist even after bodily death and dissolution, it would appear that some substrate besides the normal physical body makes this possible.

The way animists handle this is as follows. According to the animist, each human mind, both before and after bodily death, "is essentially and inseparably bound up with some kind of extended quasi-physical vehicle, which is not normally perceptible to the senses of human beings in their present life" (Broad, 1962, p. 339). It is this vehicle that some identify as the secondary or astral body they experience during OBEs, and which observers at remote locations apparently perceive in reciprocal cases. Following Broad's terminology, we could say that a human mind "informs" its secondary body, thereby constituting the unit we could call the human "soul." So before death, a human being would be composed of two intimately but only temporarily connected things: a soul and a *physical* body. We can denote their relationship by saying that the soul "animates" the physical body. Therefore (as Gauld recognized), the animist regards death as a kind of OBE in which one's soul never returns to animate the physical body (Gauld, 1982, p. 221). Philosophically, this view has an ancient and distinguished lineage, with roots traceable back at least as far as Plato's *Phaedo*.

We're now in a position to consider carefully what we may call the *OBE Argument* for survival. Because the difficulties of this argument emerge most clearly only from a step-by-step examination, I want to consider it in the following formulation which I believe presents its crucial elements and does as much justice to the position as is possible. This idealized version of the *OBE Argument* is a compendium of claims taken from the philosophers mentioned above, although (as I've indicated) some of those philosophers dispute parts of the argument.

- (1) Some accounts of OBEs are authentic (that is, the experiences happened largely as reported).
- (2) Some of the OBEs reported in those accounts are veridical (that is, the subjects accurately describe objects or events that they were not physically in a position to observe normally).
- (3) The veridicality of at least some of those OBEs is not fortuitous (that is, there seems to be a kind of causal connection between certain states of affairs and the subject describing those states of affairs correctly).

- (4) The non-fortuitous veridicality of OBEs can't be explained in conventional physiological terms (e.g., as a relatively infrequent neurological phenomenon) or conventional psychological terms (e.g., as a dissociative hallucination).
- (5) The non-fortuitous veridicality of OBEs also can't be explained in terms of "ordinary" ESP.
- (6) *Therefore*, the most plausible remaining explanation is externalism, the hypothesis that one's mental activity can literally be at locations different from that occupied by one's body.
- (7) *Therefore*, at least some mental states (those at locations remote from the body) are distinct from bodily states.
- (8) According to the survival hypothesis, one's characteristic mental activity can continue in the absence of corresponding bodily activity, even after bodily death.
- (9) *Therefore*, externalism is at least compatible with the survival hypothesis, even if it doesn't entail it.
- (10) *Therefore*, to some extent, the evidence for OBEs also supports the survival hypothesis.

This argument strikes me as deeply problematical both empirically and philosophically. Although I would argue that steps 1) and 2) are uncontroversial, I invite more skeptical readers (or those simply unfamiliar with the evidence) to accept them provisionally. That will allow us to focus on the more interesting issues raised by the argument. Besides if 1) and 2) are false, then the *OBE Argument* is dead in its tracks and there is no point in pursuing it further. Let us also grant steps 3) and 4), at least for the sake of argument. As we will see, this in no way lets the proponents of the *OBE Argument* off the hook. On the contrary, the most interesting problems with the argument remain.

Before proceeding, however, I should mention that Griffin's case for the relevance of OBEs is more complex than the argument presented above (Griffin, 1997). Although Griffin concedes that the most important fact (in this context) about OBEs is that some of them are veridical, he argues - as does Broad (1962) - that it is the *totality* of features common to OBEs that externalism handles more easily than rival explanations. Griffin also argues that, although the OBE evidence by itself lends some support to the survival hypothesis, when that evidence is combined with the evidence from mediumship and reincarnation, the case for survival strengthens considerably. I'll address the first of Griffin's points, about the totality of features of OBEs, later in this paper. For now, I prefer to focus on the apparently crucial role played by veridical OBEs. The second of Griffin's points, about the weight of various types of parapsychological data taken together, is a topic that must be reserved for another time.

Why Externalism?

The first set of questions to consider, then, is: "Why should we accept set 5) in the OBE Argument?" "Why is it unsatisfactory to explain veridical OBEs by appealing to ESP, rather than some sort of traveling consciousness?" Almeder and Woodhouse answer these questions, in part at least, by appealing to an interesting and ingenious experiment reported in 1980 by Osis and McCormick (Osis & McCormick, 1980). The subject for the experiment was the psychic Alex Tanous, who induced OBEs during which he identified remote targets (optical images) that could be viewed normally only from a very specific location in front of a viewing window. In addition, a strain-gauge at that location detected perturbations when Tanous - ostensibly out of his body - was trying to identify the target. In other words, the strain-gauge was registering mechanical effects at the spot where Tanous's perceptual perspective seemed to be. Furthermore, there was significantly more activation of the strain-gauge on trials when Tanous correctly identified the targets than on trials when he did not. According to both Almeder and Woodhouse, these results support the externalist claim that Tanous's mental activity was literally at the location of the strain gauge[3].

[3] For criticism along more or less internalist lines, see Almeder (1992), Grim (1994), and Woodhouse (1994a; 1994b).

But clearly, there's no compelling reason to accept that conclusion unless we can rule out explanations in terms of both clairvoyance and psychokinesis (PK). Osis and McCormick reject one version of this

hypothesis: a suggestion by Rhine that PK effects would occur at the surface of ESP stimuli (Osis & McCormick, 1980, p. 327). Although their results suggest that Rhine's conjecture is false, other hypotheses remain live options. Clairvoyance would explain Tanous's ability to identify the targets, and PK (from either subject or experimenters) would account for the strain-gauge readings. Although Woodhouse has little to say on the matter (apart from a few remarks in Woodhouse, 1994a), Almeder rejects this explanatory strategy, and he claims that its principal flaw is the appeal to PK. That's not because Almeder denies the existence of PK. The problem, he argues, is with the assumption that Tanous's PK would be *unintentional*. Almeder writes, "People do not produce effects consistent with action at a distance (or general PK) unless they have a deliberate intention to do so" (Almeder, 1992, p. 186). And he asks rhetorically, "what evidence do we have - either in the lab or outside - that this unintentional PK works in *a regular way* consistent with the data in the Osis-McCormick experiment?" (p. 186, emphasis in original).

Unfortunately, Almeder overlooks several bodies of relevant evidence, from both inside and outside the lab. Helmut Schmidt's PK tests provide several examples of unintentional PK in laboratory experiments (see the survey of Schmidt's work in Braude, 2002). For instance, in one series of experiments, significant PK effects were obtained with target systems of whose existence the subjects were unaware (at least normally) and which neither subjects nor experimenters knew were serving as targets. Some of Osty's experiments with the physical medium Rudi Schneider might be even more relevant (Braude, 1997; Gregory, 1985). The most impressive result obtained with Rudi was discovered only after introducing a kind of electronic device not originally considered appropriate for the experiment, and which was so state-of-the-art that it was unknown even to most physicists at the time. But most important, the discovered effect - the regular correlation of Rudi's breathing with the absorption of an infrared beam - was one no one had anticipated. Granted, Schneider knew he was expected to produce PK effects and where those effects were supposed to occur. But nobody expected to discover effect related to the absorption of infrared beams, and Schneider understood too little about the experimental set-up to deliberately intend (either consciously or unconsciously) to produce that effect. Additional regular, and presumably unintentional, effects have been reported in poltergeist cases (see Gauld & Cornell, 1979).

I see no compelling reason, then, for regarding the strain-gauge readings in the Osis-McCormick experiments as anything other than examples of PK, which - like the many other well-documented PK effects they resemble - neither suggest nor require the externalization or independence of mental activity from bodily states. But in that case, we must ask again: "Why reject ESP explanations of veridical OBEs and appeal instead to externalism?" Let us assume, as I think we must, that we have ample independent evidence for the existence of ESP. What would it take, then, to show that OBEs are an altogether different sort of phenomenon? The answer, presumably - and certainly the one usually given - is that the evidence for OBEs is radically discontinuous with the evidence for other apparent forms of ESP.

Of course, OBEs and ESP experiences might be distinct even if they are qualitatively very similar, or even if there is no systematic qualitative difference between them. As Woodhouse correctly observes, the two phenomena might simply be different ways of acquiring information about remote events (Woodhouse, 1994a, p. 32). Still, if people don't leave their bodies during ESP but do leave them during OBEs, it's reasonable to think that this difference would be apparent somehow at the level of experience. It is at this point that survivalists sometimes argue for the distinctiveness of OBEs as compared to ESP. But for that strategy to work, it's not enough merely to point out that OBEs and ESP experiences differ phenomenologically. After all, the other apparent forms of ESP also differ from each other phenomenologically. The evidence for ESP is drawn from a vast experiential palette encompassing apparitions, dreams, slightly altered states (as in ganzfeld experiments), card-guessing tests, and mundane and apparently unremarkable hunches or urges. But (we are told), OBEs differ from ESP experiences in more dramatic and thoroughgoing ways.

What impresses defenders of the *OBE Argument* is not simply *that* OBEs differ subjectively from other types of apparent ESP. What matters is the way in which they differ. OBEs have extremely vivid and distinctive types of bodily sensations. They feel intensely and clearly that they travel away from their physical bodies. And those experiences seem at least as clear as many ordinary perceptions. Still, that's no reason for concluding that the sensations are veridical and that the person is genuinely located apart from the body. In fact, that would be as unwarranted as drawing the analogous inference from lifelike drug- or hypnotically-induced hallucinations. Many recreational users of mescaline or LSD experience the walls breathing, and that experience may be consistent across different sensory modalities (sight, touch, hearing). But neither the vividness nor the pervasiveness of the experience justifies concluding that the walls actually breathe. As far as OBEs are concerned, the most we are entitled to say is that the evidence is compatible with externalism. But because the OBE evidence is also compatible with explanations in terms of ESP, and because we have independent evidence for phenomenologically diverse and robust forms of ESP, it would be premature (at least) to say that the OBE evidence *supports* externalism. A more cautious and parsimonious view would be that veridical OBEs are simply a particularly vivid (or imagery-rich) subset of ESP experiences. In fact, in light of the totality of evidence for ESP, we should probably *expect* some ESP experiences to take the form of OBEs.

To see why, let's review some relevant theoretical and empirical matters about ESP. First, whatever one might think about the quality of the evidence, ESP would have to be at least a two-stage process. The first stage would be a stimulus (or interaction) stage during which (to put it loosely) the subject receives some information from a remote state of affairs. In the case of telepathy, this causal interaction is with another individual's mental state; in the case of clairvoyance it would be a physical state (e.g., a house on fire). The second stage of ESP would be a response (or manifestation) stage during which the subject expresses or experiences the results of the first stage. Since the early days of the Society for Psychical Research, parapsychologists have recognized that subjects have an opportunity, during this second stage, to profoundly shape the nature of their ESP experiences. The underlying process would parallel a familiar feature of ordinary perception. We know that different people can have quite different experiences of the same event, depending on their own cognitive idiosyncrasies, prevailing moods, needs, concerns, and so on. Presumably, something similar would be inevitable in the second stage of ESP. At that point, subjects could impose their idiosyncratic predispositions and personality characteristics (or psychological "signatures") on the evidence. Subjects' responses to a psychic stimulus would pass through a kind of psychological filtering system, consisting of their general conceptual framework, assumptions, and state of mind at the time. This plausible conjecture also explains why subjects in free-response ESP experiments seem to filter, distort, or symbolically transform target images according to their own distinctive predispositions, biases, needs, and histories.

The parapsychological literature contains many examples of this process. In one well-known dream-telepathy experiment, a target picture of an old rabbi was apparently altered by a Protestant subject into Christian and secular imagery (Braude, 2002, p. 113; Ullman, Krippner, & Vaughan, 1989). Subjects might also modify visual perspective or change only selected elements of a target scene. Or, subjects might fixate on minor elements of a scene that they find especially interesting or meaningful. For example, if the target is a picture of a man in front of a fence, the subject might have an image of a man behind the fence (or behind bars). Or, if a small detail of the target picture is coiled rope, images of rope might figure prominently (rather than peripherally) in the subject's experiences (see Ullman *et al.*, 1989 for examples of these and related types of apparent psychic distortions; and see Sinclair, 1930/1962 and Warcollier, 1938/1975, for earlier examples of idiosyncratic distortions). Admittedly, it is often difficult to distinguish partial hits from misses in free-response ESP tests. But this much seems clear: ESP experiences are likely to be a cognitive cocktail of accurate information and confounding material generated by the subject. And most importantly, the subject may contribute to this mixture by altering or *supplying* the visual perspective from which the information is presented.

In fact, we can't hope to evaluate the significance of OBE imagery until we get clear on the role of imagery in ESP generally. Defenders of the *OBE Argument* may simply have skipped this important step. Parapsychologists have known for many years that some ESP subjects experience more vivid imagery than others. They have also known that ESP may occur without any accompanying imagery. In many reported cases of telepathy and clairvoyance, subjects seem to experience nothing more than inexplicable and incongruous desires to act (e.g., "I should phone so-and-so?"). And of course, in classic card-guessing ESP tests, subjects typically experience nothing at all that is subjectively noteworthy. So it appears that occurrences of ESP are as varied and idiosyncratic as other kinds of mental states, and that (as in the case of memory) some people's psychic experiences are regularly - and perhaps unusually - detailed, vivid, and rich in imagery.

But in that case, it is reasonable to interpret OBEs as imagery-rich manifestations of ESP, and it's reasonable to conclude that for some the information gathered is accurate and perspectival, just as it may be for ESP not accompanied by an OBE. But then there's no need, and certainly no compelling reason, for saying that subjects actually leave their bodies in veridical ESP *or* OBE experiences.

Now let us approach the matter from another angle. Consider, first, the ESP dramatically demonstrated by star subject Pat Price in the remote viewing experiments at SRI (Targ & Puthoff, 1977; Targ, Puthoff, & May, 1979). Price often gave accurate and detailed descriptions of the locations visited by an outbound experimenter. But he tended to describe those sites from perspectives quite different from those of the outbound experimenter. Often, he described locations as if he first looked at them from high in the air and then zoomed down toward the target. Now granted, if a person were to have a normal visual perception of the target location from that perspective, the person would initially have to be located far above it. So at first glance, this might seem to help the case for externalism. After all, externalists could argue that *both* perspectival ESP and veridical OBEs require subjects to be located somehow at the appropriate point in space. That is, they could claim that normal and paranormal forms of information-acquisition have similar structures, so that clairvoyant awareness requires being located in space in roughly the same way that visual or auditory perception requires a spatial location. Therefore, externalists could argue that Price, like an OBEr, was somehow at the altitude from which he viewed the target. Unfortunately for the externalist, the parapsychological data suggest that this strategy is simply untenable.

To see why, compare ESP of card faces in a sealed deck to visual perception of those cards. Visual perception of, say, the tenth card down is physically impossible as long as the deck is sealed. When the deck is sealed, there simply is no location from which a person can view *any* card in the deck. But apparently that hasn't prevented subjects from correctly identifying cards in ESP tests. Moreover, if ESP of the card depended on some sort of emanation from the card (as visual perception requires the reflection of light rays from the object perceived), it seems impossible to explain the *selectivity* of ESP - for example, the ability to identify specific cards in the deck. As C. D. Broad recognized, the clairvoyant emanations from the face of the card would be part of a much larger package of emanations. In visual perception we perceive only the facing surface of an object. And because not every object is transparent to light rays, visual perception can be blocked by intervening objects. But in clairvoyance we needn't physically face the object in question, and apparently every object is transparent to clairvoyance. So if clairvoyance (like sight and hearing) is mediated by some kind of emanation, those emanations would be arriving from the identifying front of the card, but also from the back of the card, from all the other cards in the deck, from every object in the room, and (presumably) from everything in the universe. Similar problems arise in the case of subjects who can correctly identify target pictures in sealed envelopes (see Broad, 1953).

So, assuming the integrity of at least the better evidence for ESP, extrasensory perception and accurate visual perception seem to differ in at least one critical respect. The evidence for clairvoyance shows that a

person need not be suitably situated in the vicinity of an object to have clairvoyant awareness of it, even when ordinary visual perception of that object requires occupying a specific location in space. In fact, it shows that clairvoyant awareness of an object or an event can occur even when there is *no* position in space from which a person could normally be aware of it. So there's no reason to think that Pat Price needed somehow to be positioned far above the objects he described, or (more generally) that clairvoyant awareness ever requires being located in space in the way required for normal perspectival perception. But then we also have no reason to suppose that veridical OBEs require subjects to be located somehow in the vicinity of the objects apparently perceived. Therefore, in the Osis-McCormick experiments, there is no reason to insist that "in the case of Tanous's alleged ventures ... a correct call depended on being exactly in the right place for the optical illusion to take shape" (Woodhouse, 1994b, p. 9).

Language can be seductively misleading, and it would not be surprising if a subtle misuse of language makes the *OBE Argument* more appealing initially than it deserves to be. The problem here, if there is one, concerns the possibly improper use of perception terms. Admittedly, it's tempting to say that the OBEr *sees* certain objects during an OBE, or (using scare quotes to indicate that we don't really know what we're saying) that the person "sees" those objects. But strictly speaking, "perceive," "feel," "hear," "see," and "smell" are words whose customary meaning derives from the way in which our sensory organs interact with physical objects. So it is unclear whether these terms should ever have been used in connection with OBEs, no matter how perspectival OBE imagery may be. At the very least, the familiar uses of perception terms in this context may be needlessly problematical.

To see why, consider the following analogy. If I hallucinate a hippo in the corner, it would be false to say I *see* or *perceive* a hippo. Perhaps it's a bit less misleading to say I see or perceive a non-existent hippo. But the correct and circumspect thing to say is - not that I see or "see" a hippo (of any kind) - but simply that I *seem* to see or perceive a hippo. Moreover, my hippo hallucination (like my dream images) will be perspectival even though I don't stand in any corresponding spatial relation to a hippo. In fact, the objects in our hallucinations and dreams will appear *as if* they are viewed from a point in space *whether or not* there is a location from which the perspective is derived. That's why I can dream vividly that I'm standing on the edge of a cliff even when I'm lying in bed. Presumably, then, we should describe the dream case as we did the hippo case. We should say that I *seem* to be looking over the edge of a cliff, not that I am looking (or "looking") over the edge of a cliff. So perhaps similar caution is appropriate even in the case of veridical OBEs. Perhaps we should say that the OBEr seems to perceive or observe the objects or events described correctly. Or perhaps we could use the relatively neutral term "aware" and say that in veridical OBEs subjects are aware of remote states of affairs. That may help counter the temptation to regard "aware" as shorthand for a disjunction of such ordinary perception terms as "perceive," "see," and "hear." After all, one of the big questions about ESP is whether or how it differs from ordinary forms of perception[4]. So, because ESP of sealed objects suggests strongly that ESP differs profoundly from ordinary visual perception, it would seem question-begging to assume, from the start, that subjective states of OBE subjects are straightforwardly describable with ordinary perception terms[5].

[4] In this respect, of course, the term "ESP" (for extra-sensory perception) is misleading. What many wonder about ESP is precisely whether it is a form of awareness that is either non-perceptual, or at least radically different from the perceptual modalities already identified.

[5] Hart (1956) offered an interesting variant of the *OBE Argument*. Like other proponents of that argument, he claimed that OBEs (especially reciprocal cases) demonstrate that the projected figure or phantasm should be understood as a vehicle for (or center of) the consciousness of the projector. From that, he reasoned that the many common characteristics of apparitions of the dead and the living show that they belong to the same class of objects. So, he inferred, it's reasonable to hold that apparitions of the dead are likewise vehicles for the consciousness of the deceased person. This argument may well have more problems than its initial premise. But for our purposes, we need only to note that it gets off to a

very shaky start. The considerations in this section seem clearly to undermine (or at least cast serious doubt on) Hart's initial claim that projected figures in reciprocal cases seem clearly to be locations of, or vehicles for, the consciousness of the projector.

Distinctness and Independence

So far, we have been questioning step (5) in the *OBE Argument* - the claim that we can't satisfactorily explain veridical OBEs in terms of ESP. And we've considered reasons for regarding that claim as unconvincing and probably false. Let's now examine subsequent steps in the Argument, to see what additional problems remain.

Assuming that the first five steps in the *OBE Argument* are satisfactory, then step (6) would perhaps be a reasonable inference. That is, if we can't explain OBEs in terms of normal or unusual bodily processes or in terms of ESP, then some sort of externalist hypothesis is a genuinely live option. But it is still not clear sailing for the *OBE Argument*. The next serious problem with that argument concerns the move from (7) to (9) where there may be some important (and contentious) missing steps.

Remember, first of all, the central philosophical intuition behind the *OBE Argument*. The intuition is that OBEs demonstrate a profound distinction between mind and body, and thus they show that human beings are not simply physical systems. That conclusion, in turn, suggests that our characteristic mental activity can continue after bodily death. It's this underlying intuition that steps (7) through (9) try to capture. Notice, however, that I stated the conclusion in step (9) very conservatively, so that all externalists would be likely to endorse it.

(9) *Therefore*, externalism is at least compatible with the survival hypothesis, even if it does not entail it.

This statement is modest because it avoids making the strong claim that externalism entails personal survival, or even the weaker claim that the truth of externalism lends a high degree of probability to the survival hypothesis. Step (9) is true if externalism is merely *compatible* with the survival hypothesis. But if the *most* that can be said for externalism is that it's compatible with survival, then that result is clearly underwhelming. Externalism might be compatible with survival even if there are good reasons for concluding that the survival hypothesis is *false*. For example, Woodhouse (who argues for externalism) comments:

"Externalism does not entail anything about survival of bodily death, except that it does not rule it out. It is a tremendous conceptual jump from, say, a 30-minute OBE to immortality." (Woodhouse, 1994b, p. 14)

Irwin concurs. He writes:

"Even if OBE research should support the existence of a non-physical element of being, it might not bear directly upon the issue of whether this element is immortal." (Irwin, 1985, p. 25)

Echoing Ducasse (Ducasse, 1961, p. 164), Irwin continues:

"... it should not be assumed that during life the non-physical element animates the body. In fact the reverse may be the case, so that destruction of the body occasions the death of the non-physical element." (Irwin, 1985, pp. 25-26)

Therefore, to show that externalism actually *supports* (or entails) the survival hypothesis, more needs to be said. That's why some proponents of the *OBE Argument*, such as Almeder, do try to say more. So we must ask: *Why exactly* would the distinctness of mind from body lead us to accept the survival hypothesis? As Woodhouse, Irwin, and others have noted, it's not enough simply to claim that mind and body are distinct. What matters is the way in which they differ.

At this point it might be instructive to recall the passage from Almeder, quoted earlier.

"Obviously, if people can literally leave their bodies, then human personality is something distinct from the body itself. The person who leaves her or his body and then returns to it must be something more than just the very complex organism whose properties are revealed by physical science. Such a person would need to be some sort of non-physical being that lives *in* the body." (Almeder, 1992, p. 163)

Then, in the concluding section of his chapter on OBEs, Almeder writes:

"the evidence [for veridical OBEs] strongly warrants our endorsing some form of mind-body dualism that eschews a pure reduction of human personality to bodily existence as we know it ... [We have in these best cases enough in the way of "proof" to justify a rational belief in some form of postmortem personal survival." (Almeder, 1992, p.194)

Let's assume, for the moment, that we understand what it means to say that a person "leaves" the body. Even if we then concede that the individual leaving the body is something more than the organism described by physical science, that won't give Almeder what he needs.

In particular, and contrary to what Almeder claims, it doesn't warrant the conclusion that a person can exist independently of the body.

Ducasse saw this clearly. He noted that animists consider the physical body to be causally dependent on the thing that leaves the body. They would say that under normal circumstances, the secondary (or astral) body animates the physical body by being infused throughout the physical body (or co-located with it). During OBEs the secondary body animates the physical body in a different way, either through its connection with a "silver cord" (according to some accounts), or by means of an invisible and currently unidentified connection. But, Ducasse (1961) noted:

"it could equally be that the animation is in the converse direction, that is, that death of the body entails death of the conscious 'double' whether the latter be at the time dislocated from or collocated with the former." (p. 164)

Now, Almeder doesn't subscribe to the existence of astral bodies; so he doesn't endorse a classically animist position. **But Ducasse's underlying point is that mind may be causally dependent on body even if mind and body are distinct.** That point weighs equally against Almeder's version of externalism. Part of the problem is that there are as many forms of dualism as there are flavors of ice cream. And many philosophers take mind and body to be different while at the same time holding that mind can not exist without the body. In fact, some of those deny psychophysical reductionism while remaining staunch physicalists. They subscribe to a kind of substance-monism according to which the world is comprised fundamentally of physical stuff, even though our descriptions of mental events can't be translated without residue into physical terms. But then it is clear that one can take mind and body to be distinct while rejecting the survival hypothesis.

Fortunately, we can illustrate the problem without surveying (either comprehensively or cursorily) the full spectrum of possible - or even widely-held - positions in this complex arena. One example will suffice. Epiphenomenalists argue that mental events are merely by-products of physical events. Although they differ from physical events, mental events are entirely causally dependent on underlying physical processes, and in fact, mental events have no causal powers of their own. For example, although it seems as if our volitions cause our actions, the apparent efficacy of our volitions is misleading. Both our actions and our volitions are caused by physical events. Volitions, according to this view, are merely symptoms of that underlying causal network and (as it were) signals of the physical events that follow. So, in some respects, for the epiphenomenalist the relation of body to mind is analogous to that between a thing and its shadow. The object and its shadow are distinct, but once the object ceases to exist, so does the shadow.

It does not matter for present purposes whether epiphenomenalism is a viable philosophical position, and, in fact, there are good reasons for thinking it isn't (see for example, Braude, 2002; Goldberg, 1977; Kim, 1993). What matters is the ease with which we can drive a logical wedge between mind-body distinctness and mind-body independence. And that's not all we can learn by considering the relationship of an object to its shadow. That relationship differs in crucial respects from the body-mind relationship asserted by epiphenomenalists. In fact, the object-shadow relationship is strikingly similar to the alleged relationship between body and mind in OBEs. But ironically, those similarities work against the *OBE Argument* for survival.

Notice, first, that the object and its shadow occupy different locations in space, just as the mind and physical body purportedly occupy different locations during OBEs. Moreover, shadows are causally efficacious; they can have effects on the world around them. For example, shadows will lower the ambient temperature and affect light meter readings at their locations. Similarly, externalists claim that, in reciprocal OBEs and in the Osiris-McCormick experiment, the traveling mind affects the world at remote locations. In reciprocal cases, observers at the remote locations report seeing the OBEr, and in the Osiris-McCormick experiment Tanous apparently activated the strain gauge. But then, even if externalists are correct that during OBEs the mind exists apart from the physical body and can affect the world at that place, that will not advance the case for survival. After all, because **the shadow will cease to exist when the object casting the shadow ceases to exist**, for all we know the mind may be similarly dependent on the body. The question for the externalist at this point therefore must be: "Is there any reason for thinking that the mind is more independent of the body than the body's shadow?"

Before considering predictable externalist responses to that question, we should observe an important point about the connection between externalism and mind-body dualism. It's tempting to suppose that externalism presupposes a strong *substance* dualism, according to which mind and body are radically different kinds of *entities*. Almeder seems to take this view. As we've seen, he contends that the "person who leaves her or his body and then returns to it ... would need to be some sort of non-physical being that lives *in* the body." Now historically, at least, substance dualists have maintained that one crucial difference between mind-stuff and body-stuff is that the latter is extended in space whereas the former is non-extended. Thereafter, opinions diverge. For example, Descartes claimed (notoriously) that, despite this difference, mind and body interact causally. However, his follower, Malebranche, endorsed the parallelist view that mind-body interaction was merely apparent causality, with true causal connections being traceable only to God.

But these differences needn't concern us here. What matters is that, contrary to what some think, externalism presupposes neither classic Cartesian dualism nor any of its successors. Even if we grant that during veridical OBEs the mind, or some aspect of oneself (or one's consciousness), severs its normal connection with the body, nothing follows about what sort of stuff this might be (see also Woodhouse, 1994b, p. 11). Actually, for reasons I explain below, it may follow that whatever leaves the body is not an unextended Cartesian mind. But apart from that, externalism doesn't commit one to any particular view as to what kind of substance the mind (or the relevant aspect of consciousness) is. Externalists need only claim that this thing has certain functional properties - for example, the ability to mediate the OBEr's apparent perceptions of remote locations. It can remain an open question whether this thing is non-physical or possibly a kind of material stuff not currently identified by science. That simply acknowledges a reasonable point widely accepted within the philosophy of mind - namely, that even if minds and bodies are not radically different types of *hardware*, they may still differ functionally. But if this is correct and externalism doesn't have to posit a mind-stuff that differs radically from body-stuff, then the inference from externalism to survival (made by Almeder and others) is weakened considerably.

Moreover, externalism seems *incompatible* with any dualism (such as Descartes's) according to which mind is non-spatial. For the Cartesian dualist, mind may be associated somehow with a body, and even interact causally with a body. However, mind is not contained *in* the body, because that requires having a location in space. According to the Cartesian dualist, the mind is nowhere in particular, or nowhere at all. Perhaps if Descartes had been familiar with the trendy terms of current physics, he would have said that mind is non-local. At any rate, the problem is this. Externalism holds that during OBEs a person's mental activity detaches from the body and travels somehow to a location different from that of the body. But because only something in space can be *at* a location, this thing can't be what many substance dualists say the mind is: an unextended non-physical thing.

Of course, animists avoid this last problem by positing secondary or subtle bodies that have some spatial

properties. It is curious, then, that Almeder shows so little interest in this theoretical option. It might help flesh out his claim (pun intended) that minds (or perhaps *persons*) are both non-physical and localizable. But in the absence of any such hints, the reader is left wondering what, exactly, Almeder's view is.

Apparitions and Reciprocal OBEs

Fortunately, we need not agonize now over that issue. In this inquiry it seems prudent to remain as metaphysically noncommittal as possible and let the data propel us in whatever direction seems appropriate. So, let's return to the question: "Is there a reason for thinking that the mind is more independent of the body than the body's shadow?" At this point in the discussion, defenders of the *OBE Argument* might appeal to the evidence from reciprocal cases. Reciprocal cases constitute a subset of veridical OBEs, in which (1) people report seeing the OBEr at the site at which person is ostensibly visiting, and (2) the apparition accurately represents the condition or the surroundings of the OBEr at that time. Some reciprocal cases concern *crisis* apparitions, in which the OBEr is apparently observed at approximately the same time as the OBEr's death or other emergency. But many reciprocal cases involve *experimental* apparitions in which OBErs try consciously to project themselves to remote locations, for the purpose of being detected at those sites.

Consider the following examples.

Case 1

Early on the morning of January 27, 1957, "Martha Johnson" (a pseudonym) from Plains, Illinois, had a dream in which she traveled to her mother's home, 926 miles away, in northern Minnesota. In a statement sent to the American Society for Psychical Research the following May, Martha wrote: "After a little while I seemed to be alone going through a great blackness. Then all at once way down below me, as though I were at a great height, I could see a small bright oasis of light in the vast sea of darkness. I started on an incline towards it as I knew it was the teacherage (a small house by the school) where my mother lives. ... After I entered, I leaned up against the dish cupboard with folded arms, a pose I often assume. I looked at Mother who was bending over something white and doing something with her hands. She did not appear to see me at first, but she finally looked up. I had a sort of pleased feeling and then after standing a second more, I turned and walked about four steps." (Dale, White & Murphy, 1962, p. 29)

Martha woke from her dream at 2:10 a.m. (1:10 a.m. in Minnesota). The dream "nagged" her mind for several days, at which point she received a letter from her mother who wrote that she had seen Martha. Martha then replied, describing her experience and asking her mother to identify what she had been wearing. A second letter from Mrs. Johnson answered that question and provided further details about her experience.

In the first of her two letters, dated January 29, Martha's mother wrote:

"Did you know you were here for a few seconds? I believe it was Saturday night, 1:10, January 26th, or maybe the 27th. It would have been 10 after two your time. ... I looked up and there you were by the cupboard just standing smiling at me. I started to speak and you were gone. I forgot for a minute where I was. I think the dogs saw you too. They got so excited and wanted out - just like they thought you were by the door - sniffed and were so tickled." (Dale et al., 1962, p. 30)

Mrs. Johnson's second letter was written on February 7, 1957. She wrote:

"I was bending over the ironing board trying to press out a seam. ... You were standing with your back to the cupboard (the front of it) between the table and the shelf, you know, just sort of sitting on the edge of the lower part of the cupboard ... I looked at the dogs and they were just looking at you. I'm sure they saw you longer than I did ... I turned to go in the bedroom and you must have started to go out the door then. That's when the dogs went wild.

"Your hair was combed nice - just back in a pony tail with the pretty roll in front. Your blouse was neat and light - seemed almost white. ... You were very *solid* - JUST like in life. Didn't see you from the lower bust down - that I can remember, anyway." (Dale et al., 1962, p. 30)

Martha confirmed in correspondence that during her "visit" she had indeed experienced her hairstyle and clothing as her mother described.

Case 2

In October, 1863, Mr. S. R. Wilmot and his friend Mr. W J. Tait shared a cabin on the steamship *City of Limerick*, heading toward the United States. Mr. Wilmot occupied the lower of two berths. Due to the sloping of the ship's stern, Mr. Tait's upper berth was not exactly above that of Mr. Wilmot. Accordingly, the lower berth was somewhat visible from above.

After more than a week of bad weather, Mr. Wilmot was finally enjoying a decent night's sleep. In his account, he wrote:

"Towards morning I dreamed I saw my wife, whom I had left in the United States, come to the door of my state-room, clad in her night-dress. At the door she seemed to discover that I was not the only occupant of the room, hesitated a little, then advanced to my side, stooped down and kissed me, and after gently caressing me for a few moments, quietly withdrew.

"Upon waking I was surprised to see my fellow passenger ... leaning on his elbow, and looking fixedly at me. "You're a pretty fellow," said he at length, "to have a lady come and visit you in this way." I pressed him for an explanation [and he] related what he had seen while wide awake, lying in his berth. It exactly corresponded with my dream." (Sidgwick, 1891, p. 42)

Mr. Wilmot returned home to Connecticut the day after landing in New York. When he was reunited with his wife "... [a]lmost her first question, when we were alone together, was 'Did you receive a visit from me a week ago Tuesday?'" Mr. Wilmot noted that this was physically impossible, but his wife replied that she felt that she had, indeed, made such a visit. Mr. Wilmot reported his wife's explanation as follows.

"On account of the severity of the weather and the reported loss of the *Africa* [another ship that sailed from Liverpool at about the same time as the *City of Limerick*] ... she had been extremely anxious about me. On the night previous, the same night when ... the storm had just begun to abate, she had lain awake for a long time thinking of me, and about four o'clock in the morning it seemed to her that she went out to seek me. Crossing the wide and stormy sea, she came at length to a low, black steamship, whose side she went up, and then descending into the cabin, passed through it to the stem until she came to my state-room. "Tell me," said she, "do they ever have state-rooms like the one I saw, where the upper berth extends further back than the under one? A man was in the upper berth, looking right at me, and for a moment I was afraid to go in, but soon I went up to the side of your berth, bent down and kissed you, and embraced you, and then went away." (Sidgwick, 1891, pp. 42-43)

Mrs. Wilmot confirmed this story, as did her sister, Miss E. E. Wilmot, who also had been a passenger on the *City of Limerick*. Miss Wilmot wrote that, because of the stormy weather, Mr. Wilmot had been seasick for several days and was unable to leave his cabin. Apparently, the weather had also been hard on Miss Wilmot, but with Mr. Tait's help, she had been able to make it to the breakfast table the morning after the incident. During breakfast, Mr. Tait asked if she had been in the stateroom the night before to see her brother. Astonished, Miss Wilmot said "No, why?" and Mr. Tait explained that "he saw some woman, in white, who went up to my brother" in his berth (Sidgwick, 1891, p. 44). (See also the brief discussion in Broad, 1962, pp. 175-178).

Case 3

The swami Dadaji practiced OBEs as an integral part of the guru-devotee relationship. Early in 1970, he was touring in Allahabad, approximately 400 miles northwest of Calcutta. While his devotees were singing religious songs in one room of a house, Dadaji was alone in the prayer room. After emerging from the prayer room, Dadaji asked one of the ladies present to contact her sister-in-law in Calcutta to see if he had been seen at a certain address there. The Mukherjee family lived at that address, and the sister-in-law learned that they had, indeed, seen Dadaji's apparition. Osiris and Haraldsson interviewed Dadaji's

hosts in Allahabad, the sister-in-law in Calcutta, and also the Mukherjee family.

The Mukherjees reported that their daughter Roma had been lying on her bed studying for an English examination, when she heard a noise. She looked up and through an open door saw Dadaji in the study. Initially, he seemed semi-transparent, but eventually the figure became opaque. Roma then screamed, which alerted her brother (a physician) and her mother. Instead of speaking, the apparition used sign language to tell Roma to be silent and to bring him a cup of tea. Roma then went to the kitchen and left the door to the study ajar. When she returned to the study with the tea, her brother and mother followed. Reaching through the partially open door, Roma handed the figure the tea and a biscuit. Roma's mother was able to see the apparition through the crack in the door, but the brother's vantage point wasn't as good. He saw only Roma's hand reach in through the opening and come back without the tea. But there was no place for Roma to set the cup without entering the room.

At that point, Roma's father (a bank director) returned home from shopping. He was incredulous when his family told him about the apparition. But when he peeked through the opening in the door, he saw a man's figure sitting on a chair. The Mukherjees remained in the living room, within full view of the study door, until they heard a noise. They then entered the study and found that the apparition was gone, as was half of the tea and part of the biscuit. A cigarette was still burning on the table, and it was Dadaji's favorite brand. All four Mukherjees observed that the other study door was locked from the inside, by an iron bar across it and also by a bolt from above. (Osis & Haraldsson, 1976)

These cases are certainly intriguing, and *at first glance* it might seem as if a version of externalism makes sense of them. In fact; some form of animism would seem to be especially promising. It appears as if the OBEr's secondary or subtle body - and vehicle for the person's consciousness - has actually traveled to another place, so that appropriately-positioned observers can see it.

However, matters are not so simple. The appeal to apparitions doesn't really help the OBE Argument, and it may even undermine it. **Most of those who have thought carefully about apparitions explain veridical cases in terms of telepathy, and for good reason**[6]. First, it makes reciprocal OBEs continuous with a massive body of similar data for ESP generally, including the many crisis and experimental cases in which there are no apparitions. Therefore, a telepathic explanation helps systematize a large and motley assortment of psychic phenomena, and there's no need to make additional externalist assumptions - much less the animistic postulate of a secondary or subtle body. Second, **telepathy** seems to account nicely for features of apparitions that are troublesome for externalist theories.

For example, in many potentially collective cases, only some of those in a position to observe the apparition actually experience it. Accordingly, some argue that the apparition was probably not located in space and that (as one would expect) telepathic influence had succeeded with certain observers rather than others. Even more important is the familiar phenomenon of *time-displacement* (what some call "telepathic defement"). In many crisis and experimental cases, percipients experience the apparitional figure after the crisis or attempted projection. In fact, the experience can be delayed as much as several hours or days, and it usually occurs when the percipient is in a relaxed or apparently more receptive state of mind. This clearly suggests that percipients internally construct (that is, hallucinate) the apparition in response to an earlier psychic stimulus.

[6] These telepathic theories come in several varieties, but the differences between them don't matter for present purposes (see Braude, 1997 for a survey and discussion; also Broad, 1962).

Can externalists account for these two features of apparitions in terms of physically detachable aspects of consciousness or in terms of secondary bodies? The first feature, at any rate, might be manageable. Some

physical objects, such as gases, electromagnetic fields, and rainbows, are present, or spread out, in a region of space. They are also localized more intensely in certain locations than in others, and (most important) they are often *perceivable* only from certain locations. They illustrate that not all physical objects occupy space in the way a *solid body* does. Obviously, then, one could argue that apparitions might also fall into this class (See Braude, 1997; and Broad, 1962). This point has considerable merit, but it favors a PK interpretation of apparitions as much as an externalist interpretation. Nevertheless, externalist theories *can* account for failures to observe an apparition.

The phenomenon of time displacement, however, is more refractory. I suppose externalists could explain time displacement as a delayed recognition of a spatially located aspect of consciousness or secondary body. That is, they could claim that observers were at first only subliminally or subconsciously aware of the apparition, and that the experience "registered" or emerged into consciousness at a time of relatively low cognitive interference or "noise." But this strategy doesn't seem very promising. In particular, it is unclear why a delayed recognition of a formerly observed apparition would occur as if it were a present perception. Delayed recognitions of earlier perceptions are fairly common, but most are retrospective. We recognize in those cases that we had observed something. However, in reciprocal cases observers experience apparitions as present events. Even worse, externalists would presumably have to say that the apparition, a detachable aspect of the OBEr, exists in a remote region of space approximately at the time of the crisis or experiment, when the percipient is aware of it only subconsciously. Then later, the percipient experiences the apparition as existing at that location. But in that case, one would expect more reports of time-displaced apparitions at multiple times - namely, the time when they really exist in space and then later when observers have a delayed recognition of the former presence of the apparitions. But as far as I know, there are no reports, from among cases of apparent telepathic deferment, of apparitions having been spotted also at their presumed times of generation.

So far, then, externalism doesn't seem to be a very promising approach to explaining apparitions. But we should also note that it is not entirely clear sailing for telepathic theories either. Collective apparitions pose the greatest problems for those theories, for two main reasons. First, given the possibility of telepathic deferment, percipients needn't experience apparitions at any particular time, much less at the time of the presumed telepathic stimulus. Second, percipients may respond idiosyncratically to telepathic stimuli; their responses may betray distinctive psychological "signatures." As a result, telepathic theories have trouble explaining the similarity and simultaneity of the experiences of different observers. For example, they have difficulty explaining why Mr. Wilmot and Mr. Tait saw a similar apparition at about the same time. Furthermore, the case of Dadaji is particularly difficult for the telepathic theories, because of the physical traces reportedly left behind by the apparition. For these reasons and others, I argued (Braude, 1997) for a PK explanation of collective apparitions, according to which the apparitional figure is similar to the materializations produced by physical mediums[7]. Of course, in the majority of these cases externalists might propose a different explanatory strategy - in fact, the same animist strategy already considered in connection with a single remote observer. If collective apparitions require positing an observable entity at the location where the apparition seems to be, that entity might be the OBEr's subtle body rather than a materialized figure. So once again, PK and externalist theories seem to be on equal footing. Ignoring for the moment their other respective advantages and drawbacks, they seem equally able to explain both collective apparitions and also the failure to observe apparitions in potentially collective cases.

[7] Some might prefer to interpret the Dadaji case as an instance of bilocation, but the concept of bilocation needs to be made clear before that option becomes tempting. And I suspect it would be unduly optimistic to think that the analysis would go smoothly. In fact, it is not even clear that the hypothesis of bilocation adds anything new to the discussion. If bilocation is only a doubling of the body, it is unclear how this explanation would differ from that of PK (or materialization). Otherwise, bilocation seems to require a doubling of body and also a doubling or bifurcation of consciousness. And in that case, it is

difficult to see how the explanation would differ from the externalist account proposed by animists.

So perhaps no single approach to apparitions can handle smoothly all the apparitional phenomena needing to be explained. Perhaps in that case we should regard externalism as a viable option (if not the preferred hypothesis), at least some of the time. However, there remains a nagging problem for the externalist, one that afflicts every case for which externalism seems plausible. To see why, we need to consider a modified version of the old question: "Why do ghosts wear clothes?" The externalist strategy we're considering is to claim that the OBEr projects something, some kind of localizable and detachable aspect of consciousness or subtle body, to a remote location where it can then be observed. And we've seen that this externalist strategy has at least *prima facie* explanatory utility when applied to reciprocal cases. But even if we grant, for the sake of argument, that each person might have a normal physical body as well as a detachable extension or astral body, it seems far less compelling to suppose that our clothes (or accoutrements) have doubles or subtle extensions as well.

For example, suppose that, while decked out in my new Armani suit, I try to project myself in an OBE to a friend, who then has an apparition of me in my sartorial splendor. If we explain my friend's ability to describe me accurately by positing a traveling secondary body, how do we explain my friend's experience of my new suit? Does my Armani suit also have a double? It seems absurd to think so. But if we can - and indeed, *should* - explain the apparition of my Armani suit without appealing to a secondary or astral suit (for example, if we explain the apparition of my suit in terms of telepathy), it seems far less compelling to explain the apparition of me in terms of a detachable part of consciousness or secondary body.

The case of Miss Johnson, noted above, seems to reinforce this point. In that case, the clothing and hairstyle of the apparitional figure were not those of the sleeping Miss Johnson. They corresponded, instead, to the way Miss Johnson experienced herself during her OBE. So assuming that telepathic explanations are at least sometimes appropriate, one such explanation comes immediately to mind. Presumably, Miss Johnson's hairstyle and clothing during her OBE are mental constructs, just as they would be if her experience were merely a dream. But then it certainly looks as if Miss Johnson telepathically communicated those features of the OBE to her mother, as well as influencing Mrs. Johnson to experience her with arms folded, near the cupboard, and so on.

I realize this explanation might strike some as positing an unprecedented and implausibly high level of telepathic influence. However, for reasons I can only mention briefly here, that position is untenable, especially for a survivalist (see also Braude, 1997, especially chapters 4 and 7). For one thing, at our current (and considerable) level of ignorance, we're in no position, theoretically or empirically, to set any limits to the range and refinement of psychic functioning. And for another, the degree of telepathic influence posited here is *not* unprecedented. It seems that way only by imposing the wrong standard - namely, the evidence gathered from laboratory experiments. Clearly, it's risky (if not futile) to extrapolate from experimentally-elicited behavior to real-life behavior. In most cases that is analogous to inferring the full range of athletic abilities from the performances of people in straitjackets. But quite apart from general concerns about the scope and refinement of psychic functioning, rejecting telepathic explanations is not an option for most of those sympathetic to the survival hypothesis. In fact, survivalists apparently must posit equally refined telepathic influence to explain mediumistic communications. The survivalist and more conventional telepathic explanations differ mainly over the ontological status of the communicator. In the explanation sketched above, the presumed agent (Miss Johnson) is a living person, whereas survivalists contend that the telepathic agents in mediumistic settings are post-mortem surviving personalities.

Now of course, an apparitional experience could be a mixture of genuine perception (of an apparitional figure) with a telepathically-induced quasi-perception (of the figure's attire, etc.), just as genuine and quasi-perceptions combine when I hallucinate a hippo in the real corner of the room. But if we must

appeal to ESP (or PK) to explain parts of the apparitional experience, then it may simply be gratuitous to suppose that a detachable part of consciousness or astral body was actually present at the remote location.

I should add that in some reciprocal cases, it's the *percipient*, rather than the OBEr, who seems to supply the apparitional clothing and other accoutrements. In one such case (summarized in Myers, 1903, vol. 1, pp. 688-690), the Reverend Clarence Godfrey tried to appear to a friend at the foot of her bed. He made the mental effort in the late evening after retiring to bed, and he fell asleep after about eight minutes. He then dreamed that he met his friend the next morning, and she confirmed that he had appeared to her. This dream woke him, and he noticed that his clock showed 3:40 a.m. When his friend actually confirmed the experiment's success the following day, she noted that it occurred at about the time the servant put out all the lamps, which usually took place around 3:45 a.m. In her written account, she says that Godfrey "was dressed in his usual style." Podmore recognized the significance of this. He wrote that the apparition's dress:

"was that ordinarily worn in the day-time by Mr. Godfrey, and that in which the percipient would be accustomed to see him, *not* the dress which he was actually wearing at the time. If the apparition is in truth nothing more than an expression of the percipient's thoughts, this is what we should expect to find, and as a matter of fact, in the majority of well-evidenced narratives of telepathic hallucination this is what we actually do find. The dress and surroundings of the phantasm represent, not the dress and surroundings of the agent at the moment, but those with which the person is familiar." (Quoted in Myers, 1903, vol. 1, pp. 689-690)

In a similar case, Mr. G. Sinclair tried mentally to "visit" his ailing wife, whom he had left back at home while he was traveling (see Myers, 1903, vol. 1, pp. 697-698). At the time of Mr. Sinclair's attempt, he was undressed and sitting on the edge of his bed. Mrs. Sinclair later wrote, "I saw him as plain as if he had been there in person. I did not see him in his night clothes, but in a suit that hung in the closet at home." Because the apparitional clothing in these cases seems to be supplied by the percipient's mind, the cases clearly support the view that the apparition itself is likewise (as Podmore puts it) "an expression of the percipient's thoughts" and not an ordinarily perceived astral body.

Before leaving this topic, we should consider another issue regarding apparitional clothing and accoutrements. If an apparition's clothing is constructed subjectively in response to telepathic influence, then what (according to externalists) would observers perceive if the telepathy were unsuccessful or deferred to a later time? If externalists want to say that only the secondary body is genuinely perceived, are we to suppose that this body is unclad and that the clothing is supplied telepathically? What would happen, from that point of view, if the telepathy were unsuccessful? Would there be, in those cases, perceptions of naked secondary bodies? In fact, if externalists contend that our secondary bodies go forth into the world unclad, one would expect at least some reports of naked apparitions. Given the vagaries of successful ESP and PK, one would expect the genuine perception of naked secondary bodies to occur more reliably than the associated quasi-perceptions of their clothing. But as far as I know, the extensive literature on apparitions contains almost no reports of naked human figures. According to Irwill:

"... in Crookall's extensive case collection only four such cases occur and in some of these the astral body quickly became clothed" (Crookall, 1966, p. 1). (Irwin, 1985, p. 229)

At this point, externalists might argue that one's secondary body has a certain degree of malleability, so that it can alter its age, size, and other features (such as whether or not it has a beard, or long hair). So perhaps this malleability can also extend to the simulation of clothing and other aspects of the apparition. However, certain cases make this externalist strategy seem particularly incredible. Consider the following example, cited in Gauld (1982). The two persons in this case had agreed to experiment with producing OBE apparitions.

JAKOB: ... The day after our decision I drove my daughter to her job, the time was 6 p.m. I was suddenly reminded of this agreement with Eva. Then I transported myself astrally to her home and found her sitting on the sofa, reading something. I made her notice my presence by calling her name and showing

her that I was driving my car. She looked up and saw me. After that I left her and was back in the car which I had been driving all the while without any special awareness of the driving ...

EVA: I was sitting alone in the room in an easy chair. ... Suddenly I saw Jakob sitting in front of me in the car, saw about half the car as if I were in it with him. He sat at the wheel: I only saw the upper part of his body. I also saw the clock in the car, I think it was a couple of minutes before six. The car was not headed towards our house but in another direction ... (p. 228)

Presumably, positing the existence of a duplicate car is even less plausible than positing the existence of duplicate clothes. And as Gauld notes, even if the externalist manages to explain how a secondary body might transform its outer parts into semblances of clothing, it seems to go too far to suppose that our subtle bodies might also shape-shift into a half car with a clock showing the correct time. A telepathic explanation is obviously most compelling in this case, and that greatly weakens the externalist recourse to secondary bodies in other reciprocal cases.

Near-Death Experiences

It is here that defenders of the *OBE Argument* might appeal to the relevance of near-death out-of-body experiences. As with conventional OBEs, the most compelling examples of these experiences are veridical. Persons experiencing near-death OBEs frequently describe activities, people, objects, or locations which they were in no position or condition to observe, and which they might never have seen before. For example, they might report correctly that certain individuals were located in another part of the hospital (when there was no reason for predicting that those persons would be together in the hospital), and they might report accurately what those people were saying, wearing, or doing. Many near-death OBEs also describe various features of their immediate environment which they likewise were unable to view normally. For example, they might describe the pattern of tiles on the floor, or the color of a nurse's shoelaces. And sometimes they express surprise over the amount of dirt on the tops of lights in their operating room.

Consider the following report. The subject apparently watched his own open heart surgery.

"I was up at the ceiling, looking down at [Doctor Traynor] and the rest of them. ... There were two other doctors, a nurse assistant, I guess, and an anesthesiologist. I had the whole view, and I could look through those that I didn't choose to see what they were doing. ... I saw them, but I could look through them. My vision was able to penetrate the two doctors and the table so I could look down at Doctor Traynor's boots. They looked longer than others, but I guess that's because he has such short little legs. He was standing on a pad for static electricity. He told me later that that's what it was for. And I told him that he was wearing glasses. I had never seen him with glasses before, but he said that during the operation he sometimes wears special glasses." (Lawrence, 1993, p. 125)

Apart from the reported transparency of those in the operating room, this account is quite typical. I suggest we keep that reported transparency in mind as we evaluate the status of NDEs.

One interesting feature of near-death OBEs is that those experiences seem to differ considerably from dream states. In particular, percipients comment that their mental processes are surprisingly lucid and their sensory experiences are quite vivid - sometimes more so than during normal waking states. Cook *et al.* explain why this matters.

"Persisting or enhanced mentation at a time when one would expect it to be diminishing, or entirely absent, because of diminishing physiological functioning at least suggests that consciousness might not be so dependent on physiological processes as most scientists now assume." (Cook, Greyson & Stevenson, 1998, p. 379)

But why should cognitive functioning diminish under physically traumatic conditions? Some commentators on NDEs have argued that during oxygen deprivation and certain other physiologically stressful states, one might actually expect subjective experiences to take on a kind of hallucinatory clarity and brilliance (see for example Saavedra-Aguilar & Gomez-Jeria, 1989; Siegel, 1980; Siegel, 1981).

Granted, many of these attempted physiological or chemical explanations are clearly inadequate (see the

discussions in Almeder, 1992; Grosso, 1981; and Paterson, 1995). Nevertheless, as Cook *et al.* (1998) concede, "we do not even know what physiological conditions are minimally required for organized, vivid cognition" (p. 404). But that's a very important admission of ignorance. If we don't know what the physical or physiological correlates are to ordinary (much less optimal) cognitive functioning, we should be wary of taking our expectations in these cases too seriously. We simply don't know what to expect in the case of NDEs, any more than we know what to expect of savants, who display enhanced cognitive functioning despite their physiological impairments.

Paterson argues that NDEs differ systematically from illusory experiences induced by drugs, stress, or trauma (Paterson, 1995, pp. 143 -145). But contrary to what Paterson seems to think, even if there are such systematic differences, they wouldn't show that NDEs are non-illusory. We can grant that experiences of type E1 differ systematically from hallucinatory or illusory experiences E2. Nevertheless E1 experiences might also be hallucinatory or illusory. In fact, it is precisely because of systematic subjective differences that recreational or experimental drug users prefer certain mind-altering substances to others (e.g., peyote over LSD, or marijuana over hashish or cocaine). So one should probably expect there to be differences between NDEs and other altered states, even if NDEs are always illusory. Paterson also argues that unlike NDEs "the structure and contents of drug-induced hallucinations are indefinitely variable and idiosyncratic" (Paterson, 1995, p. 144). However, there are several problems with that claim. First, drug-induced hallucinations aren't as relentlessly idiosyncratic as Paterson suggests. Presumably, that's one reason certain mushrooms play a prominent role in the rituals of some cultures; users know generally what sorts of effects to expect. In our culture, too, certain specific drug-induced hallucinations can be fairly predictable - for example, the breathing walls and animated plants frequently reported by users of LSD or mescaline. Second, even if the content of drug-induced hallucinations varies more than do the content of NDEs, NDEs are linked together physiologically and psychodynamically in a way drug experiences are not. NDEs all occur under at least apparently life-threatening conditions, whereas drug experiences occur under an enormous variety of social and emotional conditions. It is probably significant that OBEs, which are more variable in their structure and content, occur under a greater variety of conditions than NDEs (see section 7).

Moreover, we shouldn't overestimate the degree of similarity among NDEs generally and near-death OBEs in particular. When we consider some of those variations, the externalist approach to NDEs loses much of its plausibility. One important difference concerns the conditions under which the experience occurs. Many reported NDEs happen when experiencers are neither seriously ill nor in any life-threatening situation, and often these experiences differ little from those that take place under genuinely life-threatening conditions. In these cases, NDErs were not really about to die; they simply *thought* they were. The reason this is important is that an externalist account of the cases seems extravagant compared to the internalist alternative. The externalist would have to say that the mere fear of death causes the detachment of something from the body. Now, we can agree with Griffin that a life-threatening event "might frighten one out of one's skin" (Griffin, 1997, p. 240). And perhaps fear alone, in the absence of any real danger, can do the same thing. But the internalist proposes simply that the fear of death produces an unusual psychological state that helps reduce the fear. To me at least, that seems clearly to be the more parsimonious option. Moreover, it has systematicity on its side. It makes NDEs continuous with many other altered states (e.g., trauma-induced dissociation) that have the function of alleviating pain or fear.

Furthermore, many features of NDEs are culturally specific, and they likewise tend to undermine externalist explanations of the phenomena. The most striking differences tend to emerge from the oldest cases in which we find (among many other things) graphic accounts of Hell (Kellehear, 1995; Zaleski, 1988). But contemporary NDEs from our own culture seem no less culture-bound. For example, some subjects report encounters with the grim reaper (Lawrence, 1993). A particularly interesting case was reported recently in the magazine of the Society for Psychological Research. The experiencer is a woman, S. J.,

whom Alan Gauld has known for many years and whom he considers to be very reliable. Her NDE occurred following childbirth, but (as in many other cases) she was in no danger of dying. She wrote:

"I remember ... feeling as if I were completely weightless, and floating in space. I was surrounded by brilliant, pulsating light, the whole of space was coloured azure fading away to paler and paler shades of blue, and wonderful music was playing. I was being asked questions by someone I couldn't see. The questions were of life-and-death importance, and I knew that whether I lived or died depended on what answers I gave, even though I cannot now remember what the questions were. When I answered correctly my body would soar even higher, but if I got a question wrong my body fell down and down through space. I answered more and more questions, and suddenly I felt I had infinite knowledge and could answer all those questions about where we came from and why we are here. I knew all the secrets of the universe. I soared higher and higher in space, and the music became triumphant because I had unlocked the secret of everlasting life!"

So far, this experience enjoys a kind of generic similarity to many other mystical or transcendental NDEs. However, another feature of the case is more unusual. When the face behind the disembodied voice was revealed to S. J., it turned out to be Bamber Gascoigne, the still-living host of a popular TV quiz program, "University Challenge." S. J.'s NDE had transformed Gascoigne into a kind of "celestial quiz-master"[8]. Now S. J. regarded her experience as a dream rather than an NDE, because she recognized that she wasn't near death. But as I mentioned, many NDEs occur in non-life-threatening situations. S. J.'s experience reveals clearly how the percipient (and his or her culture) can influence the content of an NDE, and it helps make a literal (externalist) interpretation of NDEs seem excessive. It can only strengthen the suspicion that all NDEs are fundamentally dreamlike, even if they are more vivid than most dreams. After all, the dreams of most people are not all equally distinct and vivid, and we might reasonably expect some dreams under unusual circumstances to be more remarkable than most. Moreover, NDEs might still genuinely reflect certain states of the experiencer, just as dream content often represents the dreamer's physical state.

[8] Gauld, personal communication, November 28, 1998.

But at this stage in the argument, these issues may be relatively peripheral. We're focusing on near-death OBEs, and what matters most, right now, is that some of them seem to occur *after* the experiencers meet familiar criteria for physical death - for example, the absence of a heartbeat or respiration for a considerable period of time, and even after the diagnosis of brain death. So, in these cases at least, it appears that mental activity can occur both independently of, and in another location from, bodily activity.

But once again matters aren't so simple. First, as Moody (1975/1976) observes, in clinical emergencies physicians generally have no time to prepare anyone for an EEG; usually their concern is to resuscitate their patients (pp. 102-103). So even if a flat EEG is obtained with a near-death OBE patient, that evidence would still be difficult to interpret. Moody writes:

"... resuscitation attempts are always emergencies, which last at the very most for thirty minutes or so. Setting up an EEG machine is a very complicated and technical task, and it is fairly common for even an experienced technician to have to work with it for some time to get correct readings, even under optimum conditions. In an emergency, with its accompanying confusion, there would probably be an increased likelihood of mistakes. So, even if one could present a flat EEG tracing for a person who told of a near-death experience, it would still be possible for a critic to say - with justice - that the tracing might not be accurate." (p. 102)

Besides, as Moody also notes, even when the equipment has been set up properly, flat EEGs have been obtained, in non-near-death OBE cases, for persons who were subsequently resuscitated (for example, in cases of drug overdoses and hypothermia). So it is doubtful, in any case, that a flat EEG reliably indicates physical death. And as if that weren't enough, Moody recognizes that NDEs are, *at best*, only *roughly* contemporaneous with the cessation of vital signs. **But then we can't be certain that those**

experiences occurred after the vital signs disappeared. Our ability to date the time of mental activity in NDEs depends entirely on the experiencer's retrospective testimony, and that measure is simply too crude for us to know when, exactly, the near-death OBE occurred.

But what if the experiencer accurately reports events that occurred, say, more than fifteen minutes after the cessation of vital signs?

Forgetting (at least for now) the possibility of reasonable guesses or precognitive ESP, that would seem to indicate that the near-death OBE occurred some time after the onset of clinical death. I am aware of only one near-death OBE case in which perhaps the most sensitive measure of clinical death, a flat EEG, was detected for any significant amount of time. Sabom reports the case of a woman who, for about an hour, had all the blood drained from her head, and her body temperature lowered to 60 degrees. During that time her heartbeat and breathing stopped, and she had both a flat EEG and an absence of auditory evoked potentials from her brainstem (Sabom, 1998, chapter 3). Apparently, during this period she had a detailed veridical near-death OBE. But, even in this case, it would be hasty to conclude that the woman had died, or that mental activity clearly persisted independently of bodily activity. There are several reasons why we must be cautious here.

First, as Moody notes, our criteria for determining clinical death are also crude, and there may be no justification for declaring a person dead at all if the person subsequently can be resuscitated. Perhaps death can only be an *irreversible* loss of vital functions. Cook *et al.* (1998) agree:

"... out-of-body experiencers, including near-death experiencers, are in fact still alive at the time of their experience and have not existed independently of their bodies. Even those persons who may have been pronounced dead by medical personnel were physically intact enough to have been revivable.

Consciousness may therefore *seem* to be detached from the physical body, but it may still remain dependent on it for its continued existence." (p. 380)

Sabom concurs as well, arguing that "loss of biologic life, including death of the brain, is a process and does not occur at a single, definite moment" (Sabom, 1998, p. 50). He then cites several recent studies indicating the persistence of brain or related organic activity up to a week following the careful diagnosis of brain death, and he concludes:

"These findings indicate that even when a person is deemed 'brain dead' by strict clinical criteria - that is, showing no spontaneous movements or respiration; no response to painful or auditory stimulation; and no brain stem, cough, gag, or respiratory reflexes - brain activity can often still be demonstrated days later, raising the question of *when*, if at all, death had actually occurred." (Sabom, 1998, p. 51)

Fortunately, we need not now debate the complex topic of what counts as physical death. We need only concede the following reasonable point made by Moody.

"In order for resuscitation to have occurred, some degree of residual biological activity must have been going on in the cells of the body, even though the overt signs of these processes were not clinically detectable by the methods employed." (Moody, 1975/1976, p. 103)

But, of course, one can then argue, plausibly, that the near-death OBE couldn't have occurred in the absence of that residual biological activity. And in that case NDEs wouldn't show that the mind is less dependent on a body than the body's shadow.

But let us suppose, for the moment, that we had convincing evidence that mental activity in near-death OBEs occurred in the absence of *any* residual bodily activity. Not even that would lend much support, if any, to the case for survival. The issue here connects with the observation quoted earlier from Woodhouse: "It is a tremendous conceptual jump from, say, a 30-minute OBE to immortality" (Woodhouse, 1994b, p. 14).

The survival hypothesis doesn't posit that one's characteristic mental activity continues for only a few seconds or minutes after bodily death. The evidence allegedly explained by the survival hypothesis - most of it from cases of ostensible mediumship, reincarnation, and hauntings - suggests personal survival over

many years, if not eternally. Moreover, the reason many regard postmortem survival as a source of hope and solace is that they regard it as a form of prolonged noncorporeal existence. People hope that when they die they might reunite with friends and family members who had long since "passed over."

But of course, if the evidence from OBEs is evidence of any kind of survival of bodily death - which, as we've seen, is far from obvious strictly speaking, it would be evidence only of short-term survival. It provides no justification for assuming that mental activity could persist independently of the body for periods significantly longer than an OBE. Analogies are easy to come by. For example, a person's last breath may linger briefly after bodily death. But it will dissipate quickly, and certainly it won't persist indefinitely.

Similarly, my farts can leave my body; they are distinct from my body; and they can affect the world outside my body. But they are also entirely causally dependent for their existence on my body. Now, of course, farts can (regrettably) linger for a while after coming into existence - probably considerably longer than even the most noxious final breath. But despite an enormous database of human farts, we have no reason to anticipate the production of a fart everlasting, even if that remains an empirical possibility. So it seems that even under the most charitable of readings, the evidence from OBEs shows too little. It gives us no reason to believe that the mind is more substantial, resilient, or self-sustaining than a fart.

An Appeal to Systematicity

Our discussion thus far has focused on veridical OBEs, the apparitions in reciprocal cases, and NDEs. Although these are undoubtedly the most impressive features and types of OBEs, we've seen that they lend little (if any) support to externalism, much less to the survival hypothesis. But perhaps a stronger case can be made by considering how well externalism accommodates a broad range of features of OBEs. Perhaps it has greater overall explanatory power than rival hypotheses. This is the approach adopted by Griffin (1997), and it deserves our attention. Griffin lists 13 features of OBEs most of which, he says, *prima facie* seem to count against internalist views, and which externalism handles neatly.

However, Griffin may have underestimated the explanatory power of a reasonable internalism. In view of the preceding discussion, we could expect an enlightened internalist to appeal, not simply to the creative powers of the mind and to the impressive variety of altered states, but also to the operation of psychic functioning (to explain veridicality). Presumably, then, internalists could plausibly subscribe to a kind of *altered state-plus-psi* hypothesis. They would explain the veridicality of OBEs in terms of ESP operating from within the experiencer's body or embodied mind. And they could then allow the remaining, purely subjective, features of OBEs to assume any of the myriad forms noted in research into exceptional and profoundly meaningful experiences, especially those produced in traumatic, dissociative, or other altered states. As we go through Griffin's list of features, I think we'll see that an *altered state-plus-psi hypothesis* handles the data at least as well as an externalist hypothesis. (For ease of exposition, I'll conflate some of Griffin's categories and reduce his list from 13 to 9.)

(1) OBErs feel as if they leave the body, and most have a strong conviction that the experience is real.

Externalists can explain this simply by saying that experiencers really were out of their bodies. But internalists likewise have no trouble here. As we noted earlier, when discussing hallucinations, the vividness of an experience is no mark of veridicality. In fact, the conviction of reality in OBEs needn't be regarded as more reliable than in the case of, say, convincing illusions produced by hallucinogenic drugs, or produced for naive members of a magician's audience. I am not totally convinced that OBEs are illusory. But it would be a mistake to concede Griffin's externalist point too quickly, and in fact, an enlightened internalist does have something to say in response. What the internalist needs to explain is why, if the experience of being out of the body is always illusory, more people seem to be fooled by OBEs than by drugs or magicians. And the answer, presumably, is that OBE illusions rest on a higher level (or more abstract form) of conceptual naiveté. That is, unless OBErs consider some of the complex issues

addressed in this paper as well as some general topics in the philosophy of mind, they might not realize that the idea of literally being outside one's body is conceptually problematical. By contrast, no such theoretical preparation is required to learn why drug experiences and magicians' tricks are illusory. Moreover, the conviction of reality might also be a by-product of the OBEr's use of ESP in veridical cases. Subjects might recognize (at least subconsciously) that some details of the experience were accurate, and then they might mistakenly infer that the experience as a *whole* is veridical.

It might be helpful here to compare descriptions of OBEs to the reported body perceptions of those suffering from multiple personality/dissociative identity disorder (DID). Different alter personalities often have very clear and distinct - but illusory - experiences of their bodies. That's why they object strenuously that they are the wrong size, sex, or age, to wear another alter's clothes. And in some cases, people with DID experience their alters at distinct locations in their immediate environment - for example, seated in separate chairs at therapy sessions (Braude, 1995).

(2) Most OBErs experience a greatly altered emotional state usually, an overwhelming sense of tranquility or joy and most report a complete absence of pain.

The altered emotional state clearly poses no problem for the *altered state-plus-psi* hypothesis. And in view of the long and often extraordinary history of major surgery and other procedures performed under hypnotic anesthesia, it is clear that we don't need to posit actual separation from the body to account for the painless OBEs of accident victims and hospital patients. (For a quick history of hypnotic anesthesia and other related dissociative states, see Braude, 1995. For a more comprehensive account, see Crabtree, 1993 and Gauld, 1992)

(3) Most OBErs report normally or unusually clear visual experiences and also normal bearing.

Again, there is nothing here that hasn't also been reported in connection with dissociative or drug-induced states. In fact, if OBEs are continuous with the dissociative experiences reported throughout the history of hypnosis, this perceptual clarity is precisely what one would expect (Gauld, 1992).

(4) Some OBEs are veridical.

We've covered this issue at length, and for the reasons already noted, the veridicality of OBEs doesn't require an externalist explanation. Indeed, it appears that we can account for the data at least as well in terms of ESP. But veridicality *per se* may not be what matters. Some argue for externalism by appealing to an alleged qualitative difference between veridical OBEs and non-traveling ESP. They claim that "the clarity and the accuracy of the extrasensory perceptions that are reported in OBEs greatly exceed anything ever verified in intrasomatic clairvoyance (or remote viewing), whether in experimental or spontaneous cases" (Griffin, 1997, p. 253). But there are two reasons why this claim offers no support for externalism. First, it is irrelevant whether the clarity of OBEs exceeds that of other types of ESP. As we have observed, experiential clarity is no sign of veridicality, and many drug-induced hallucinations are also routinely more clear than most ESP experiences. Second, it's highly questionable whether veridical OBEs are notably more accurate than other types of ESP, especially when we consider spontaneous cases, in which the information reported is often extremely detailed (see, for example, Sidgwick, 1922). In fact, I see no justification for claiming that the ESP from OBEs is clearly superior to the spectacularly accurate remote viewing recently declassified by the U.S. government (e.g., May, 1995, 1996; Puthoff, 1996; Targ, 1996). Furthermore, if the better mediumistic evidence can count as evidence of ESP (telepathy or clairvoyance), then the alleged superiority of the ESP from OBEs seems more dubious still.

(5) OBErs usually report that they think clearly during OBEs, and many of those who have had near-death OBEs claim that their thought processes were clearer during the experience than during their normal

waking states.

Griffin says this "would follow from the fact that the mind is free from any confusing, disorienting feelings and information from the brain" (Griffin, 1997, p. 259). That's an interesting conjecture, but our enlightened internalist can also account for the clarity of thought during OBEs. Again, the literature on hypnosis, dissociation and altered states documents many instances in which people perform at a cognitively or creatively higher level than during normal waking states. Two very dramatic examples of this phenomenon are the cases of Patience Worth (Braude, 2000) and Helene Smith (Flournoy, 1900/1994). Although we don't know how, exactly, this works, I think it's fair to say that dissociation and some other altered states help us bypass or neutralize various psychological (and possibly physical) barriers to optimal functioning. At the very least it is clear that we needn't appeal to externalist conjectures to explain unusually high levels of creative or cognitive functioning.

Moreover, perhaps we should be wary when experiencers retrospectively report their cognitive clarity during OBEs. Even if those claims are true, we must remember that drug users, dreamers, and hypnotic subjects offer similar - and presumably equally reliable - testimony regarding their earlier altered states. So once again, unusual clarity of thought seems easily compatible with internalism. We might wonder, though, how trustworthy any of these retrospective reports are. How do we determine whether the experiencers were really thinking more clearly or whether they simply thought that they were? It would be naive or arrogant to think we know how to answer that question. Besides, I suspect that many would challenge dreamers' claims to have been unusually clear or creative in their dreams, or drug-users' claims to have been unusually lucid while high. Presumably, then, to accept uncritically or without additional support the similar claims of OBErs would be to apply an unjustifiable double standard.

(6) OBErs frequently report that their experiences transformed them, profoundly altering their beliefs, values, and mood. Moreover, OBErs usually report a significantly altered sense of time.

It's simply naive to think these facts distinguish OBEs from many drug-induced and other experiences (e.g., Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1979; Tart, 1983). Besides, it's important to remember that the significance of an experience is a function, not simply of the kind of experience it is, but of who the experiencer is and the conditions under which the experience occurs. Under the right circumstances (say, an openness to change), an ordinarily minor life episode can be life-changing. Similarly, a dramatic and potentially profound experience may be insignificant if the person isn't ready for it[9].

[9] I'm grateful to Charles Tart for reminding me of this.

(7) There is "a remarkable sameness to reports of OBE from various people from different times and places, regardless of sex, age, religion, culture, occupation, the circumstances under which the OBE occurred, or any other variable" (Griffin, 1997, p. 237).

Moreover, the belief that people can literally leave and have experiences outside their bodies is virtually universal. Again, externalists would explain this simply by noting that the OBE is what it seems to be. However, I find the overall similarity of OBEs considerably less remarkable than Griffin. So I'm not sure to what extent there is a datum here to be explained. We've already considered some of the ways in which near-death OBEs are culturally influenced. But OBEs generally differ with regard to many apparently crucial features. OBErs disagree, for example, whether or not a cord connects the traveling self to the physical body; whether or not there is a perceived traveling body, or a perceptual-like awareness of the remote location; whether or not the second body is felt to be the locus of consciousness, or whether it resembles the physical body; whether or not one travels to another realm (e.g., Helene Smith's travels to Mars) or to a heavenly paradise; and whether OBE experiences seem to be at one or multiple locations (see Alvarado, 1997). If similarities remain, they can presumably be explained in any or some

combination of familiar ways - for example, universality of needs and physiology, cross-cultural similarity of symbols, and perhaps even Jungian archetypes.

(8) Despite their (allegedly) widespread similarities, OBEs have been produced under many different sorts of conditions.

Griffin argues that it is difficult for the internalist to explain how so many distinct sorts of causal chains could result in such similar experiences. Of course, externalists again have an apparently easy way of explaining that underlying phenomenological unity. They would say that OBEs simply are what they appear to be. However, the problem with this position is similar to that raised in connection with point seven. If (contrary to what Griffin claims) OBEs are not a nearly universal set of phenomenologically similar experiences, there may be no impressive datum demanding an explanation. Furthermore, the conditions that produce OBEs, whether spontaneous or experimental, sleeping or waking, do not always result in the experience of leaving one's body. For example, crisis or experimental cases may instead result in more traditional (or at least less dramatic) forms of ESP. This raises again the issue discussed in the third section of this paper, in which we considered the range and variety of imagery in ESP experiences. We noted there that **ESP occurs in many different forms, some more rich in imagery than others. And one would expect a certain subset of ESP experiences to take the form of OBEs, even if the experience of leaving the body is totally illusory.** But perhaps most important, it's unclear why it should be difficult, in principle, to explain how many different causal chains can result in similar experiences. In fact, it's the received wisdom in various branches of psychotherapy (not to mention common sense) that fears, phobias, obsessions, and many other types of mental states can have diverse causal histories. Moreover, as headaches and stomach-aches illustrate, it is actually quite common for similar experiences to have a variety of causes.

(9) We find a relatively high incidence of OBEs in the general population, especially among those in near-death situations.

I fail to see a problem here for the internalist, who (contrary to what Griffin claims) need not explain away the widespread and (allegedly very) similar accounts as "fabrications or aberrations of deranged brains" (Griffin, 1997, p. 238). As we've seen, non-crisis OBEs can be regarded as a subset of an even more widespread set of ESP experiences. Some near-death OBEs would also fall into that category, as a subset of crisis ESP experiences. And quite apart from the physiological similarities among responses to traumatic and life-threatening situations, it's reasonable to think that near-death OBEs also have very similar needs perhaps most notably, a need to make an intolerable situation tolerable. So, just as many people deal with trauma dissociatively by inducing amnesia or anesthesia, others might experience OBEs instead. In fact, it might be plausible to interpret OBEs as forms of dissociation in which visual imagery typically plays a vital role as it does, say, in the case of negative hallucinations (see Braude, 1995). From this internalist point of view, OBEs aren't deranged or aberrant responses to a situation. Instead, having an OBE would be handy adaptational strategy, and it would connect coherently with a substantial body of research into hypnosis and dissociation in general, and traumatic stress in particular[10].

[10] For a thoughtful and more detailed presentation of this position, as well as a recent study providing empirical support for it, see Irwin, 2000.

So, it is doubtful that externalists have an overall explanatory edge in accounting for the various features of OBEs. Moreover, externalists can only *conjecture* that genuinely leaving one's body would result in ostensibly clear thinking, transforming effects, and an altered sense of time. By contrast, we know that dissociation and drugs can produce these effects.

Conclusion

I think we must conclude that the case for survival receives very little *independent* support from OBEs,

NDEs, and apparitions. Indeed, considered apart from other types of evidence which suggest survival, there seems little reason to appeal to externalism to account for the data. **We can do at least as well by appealing to phenomena - including ESP - whose existence and features have already been established.** So even if survivalists can account for most of the phenomena (with the possible and nagging exception of apparitional clothing and accoutrements), other explanatory strategies seem more compelling. Of course, we might find an externalist view of OBEs and apparitions more attractive in light of the evidence from mediumship and reincarnation. And we might decide that OBEs and apparitions strengthen the case for survival made by the better evidence. **Whether a super-psi interpretation of all the data reigns supreme in the end is a matter I'll address on another occasion**[11].