

Exploring The Afterlife Experience

[Metaphysical explorer and author, Robert Bruce, discusses the nature of the afterlife experience and how this relates to Out-of-Body and Near-Death Experience]

by

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What really happens after you die? What happens when you sleep and dream? What actually leaves your physical body during an Out of Body Experience (OBE) Astral Projection or Near Death Experience (NDE)? And more importantly, how are these things connected? Theories and myths concerning the afterlife abound, based on religious beliefs and mythologies. The best evidence we have to support the possibility of an afterlife is anecdotal, including the study of NDE where people temporarily die but are then revived, sometimes with tantalizing memories of experiencing the beginnings of spectacular afterlife experiences.

As human beings, we tend to align our personal spiritual beliefs with the consensus beliefs of our culture, so we can fit in. Beliefs and expectations have a great deal to do with the afterlife experience, even if this is only brief, as in Near Death Experience. Survivors of NDE often experience a tunnel of light and see deceased loved ones, often with religious overtones matching their beliefs. Devout Christians may see Jesus, but they will never have a Buddhist, Islamic, or Hindu themed NDE, and vice-versa. Heartfelt spiritual beliefs are deeply rooted in the subconscious mind and will always colour the NDE or afterlife experience. What kind of afterlife experience do Stone Age hunter-gatherers hidden from the modern world and its religions have? Beliefs and expectations *generate* individual afterlife experiences, and are not the actual truth. The afterlife environment is fluid and changeable and there is no set way that it unfolds. So in this sense everyone is right, even the atheists.

Let's examine what happens during others form of temporary departure from the physical body. The Out-of-Body Experience (also called OBE or astral projection) is remarkably

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similar to the NDE. In fact, the only real difference is that during OBE there is a living body in which to return to physical life. OBE launches one into a fluid and subjective environment, The Astral Dimension, which is changeable by thoughts, expectations, and beliefs.

The human body is composed of several subtle bodies, including the etheric, astral, mental, and higher. All the subtle bodies are held within the living physical body/mind while it is awake. We typically spend one-third of our lives asleep, and a lot more happens during sleep than we currently suspect. All of the subtle bodies are loosened during sleep and OBE, and progressively released after physical death. So by examining dreaming, OBE, and NDE, tantalizing glimpses of what actually happens in the afterlife are revealed.

I began having spontaneous OBE's around the age of four and had hundreds in my childhood. I taught myself to deliberately induce OBE (to Astral Project) at the age of twenty, when I began a serious long-term exploration of OBE and its related phenomena. This also got me started exploring the afterlife process, which is related. I often have visions and experience astral sight and hearing (levels of clairvoyance and clairaudience) when I am deeply relaxed or meditating. This allows me to witness and even interact to some extent with astral projectors and spirits. Every person, and most if not all animals, spontaneously astral project whenever they sleep. They look like glowing steam copies rising out of their physical bodies, if observed with astral sight. Often the astral form sleeps just above its physical body, but sometimes it engages in other activities. These experiences are rarely remembered afterwards.

Most astral projectors are not aware when they separate from their physical bodies. This can lead to what is called False Awakening, where people get out of bed (and move out of body without knowing it) and go to the bathroom or kitchen, only to find they are back in their physical bodies' moments later. This is confusing for adults, and can cause bedwetting in children. Children get up to go to the toilet (and move out of body) and then wake up in bed halfway through emptying their bladders.

People do not usually remember leaving their bodies because of what I call The Mind Split Effect. When a person projects out-of-body, an energy copy of his/her body and mind is

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generated and projected out. The original copy of consciousness, of mind and memory and spirit, never leaves the physical body while it lives; with the temporary exception of NDE.

The Mind Split Effect: Until my work on the Mind Split Effect was released in my book Astral Dynamics in 1999, it was historically assumed that the whole consciousness of a person, including mind, memory, and spirit, accompanied the astral body during OBE, leaving the physical body/mind an empty shell or husk. This empty body assumption grew from poorly-understood Eastern esoteric doctrines, as well as from misunderstanding the nature of OBE. The ancient Egyptians taught that the astral body (or Ba – depicted as a birdlike spirit with a human face in hieroglyphics) leaves the body temporarily during sleep and permanently at death. Early proponents and authors on OBE and the afterlife were influenced by this material, and passed this empty body assumption along to the public in books. These books were used as source material for the next generation of authors, and so on, carrying the empty body assumption along to present day. Added to this, the experience of separating from the physical body during OBE or NDE is extremely visceral. It is difficult to get past this kind of history and firsthand experience when considering the workings of OBE and NDE. After all, it is obviously impossible to be in more than one place at the same time – or is it?

After a successful OBE, only one side of it is usually remembered – from the projected astral body, or the physical body/mind, or the dream mind. But it is necessary to have memories from all these aspects during an OBE before the mind split effect can be perceived. This is a natural process that always occurs at the beginning of an OBE, and during sleep. This can also occur unnoticed during meditation, where the physical body sleeps while its mind stays awake. At these times, consciousness projects a subtle energy copy of itself outside the bounds of its physical body. This can be thought of as an echo of consciousness. It reflects into a subtle energy vehicle called the Astral Body, which is internally generated and then extruded. The astral body is maintained outside the physical body/mind through unbreakable subtle-energy cords, connecting the physical body with its astral body. The most visible of these is called The Silver Cord, which extends from the navel. This process never leaves the physical body/mind

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empty and unguarded, and people are no more at risk during OBE than they are during normal sleep.

The original copy of consciousness (of spirit, mind, and memory) always remains safely inside the physical body/mind while it lives, with the temporary exception of Near-Death Experience (NDE). When the physical body dies (and during NDE), a massive amount of life force is transferred into the astral body along with consciousness. This increased energy explains the vivid intensity and memorable nature of NDE.

I discovered the mind split effect by accident during a powerful OBE around 1990. During my first conscious mind split experience, I remained fully conscious in my tranced physical body/mind and also fully aware in my projected astral double, at the same time. After a seemingly-failed OBE projection attempt, my physical aspect sat tranced and semi-paralysed, but wide awake and experimenting with astral sight. (Astral sight is a level of clairvoyance that allows one to see into the astral dimension). My projected astral double was at this same time experimenting with how the physical body/mind and its astral projected counterpart affect each other at close range. By sheer accident my two aspects caught sight of and connected with each other. I/we experienced a nauseating telepathic mirror-mind effect, with our two identical minds reflecting back and forth into each other, like opposing mirrors compounding into infinity.

Subsequent experiments with the mind split effect and its phenomena, and consulting with thousands of astral projectors over decades, continue to support my original hypothesis. The mind split effect has wide-ranging implications for all aspects of OBE, NDE, lucid dreaming, meditation, incarnation, death, and the afterlife. For example, the mind split effect helps explain why some people who experience NDE do not remember what happened, for the same reason that most people do not remember OBE. OBE and dream memories have to download into conscious and recallable levels of memory to be remembered. If this download does not occur, then it is like the experience never happened.

The mind split effect has gone unnoticed for so long because of the subtle way in which it happens, and because the physical body's brain/mind habitually stores only a single memory

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for any given time period. If there is more than one memory, only one is stored in conscious memory, and the others are lost. Astral projection (OBE) itself is fairly easy to accomplish. All that is needed is a deeply-relaxed physical/mental state (your body will feel very heavy when this happens) and then *feel* yourself floating up out of your body. But remembering an OBE afterwards is difficult because of the nature of the mind split effect. And without the memory it's like nothing happened, even if it did.

Examples of this memory download issue are found in the common experience of remembering a dream upon waking, and then forgetting it moments later. E.G., you awaken with a spectacular dream memory and say “Wow, I’ll never forget that!” but a few moments later it vanishes. You struggle trying to pull it back and it reappears, but then disappears again moments later. This may happen many times if you keep trying, until it either vanishes completely or you jot down notes to remind you of what happened. This dream memory may also suddenly reappear hours later, if something happens to jog your memory. Another curious thing about losing a dream is that you will usually remember that you had a great dream and then lost it. Dream memories behave in a radically different way than normal life experience memories. Dream memories are similar in this respect to OBE memories, which are even harder to remember.

When the projected astral double separates from its physical body, it takes with it a full copy of all its memories up to the precise moment the mind split occurs. Breaking away from its physical body/mind, the projected astral double thereafter records its OBE memories separately. The physical body/mind – if it remains awake for a time, as often happens – will also continue recording its memories independently, of an apparently unbroken existence within the physical body after an apparently failed astral projection attempt. Both the physical body/mind and its projected astral double record TWO completely different memory sets, from the moment of separation until they reintegrate when the physical body awakens. After reintegration, the strongest memory set for this time period (typically from the physical body/mind) will become the dominant memory recorded by the physical body’s brain/mind. This makes the recall of OBE

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memories a fairly difficult proposition by nature.

I think the purpose of the natural sleep-induced mind split effect is to enable the spiritual aspects of a person to regularly shift (during sleep) into higher dimensional levels for the purpose of connecting with his/her spiritual roots, and with elusive spiritual processes that relate to the meaning and purposes of life and incarnation. We do not know the full story behind these processes, but we get glimpses of them occasionally. In this sense, OBE, Lucid Dreaming, and even NDE, could be loopholes through which we sometimes fall down the proverbial rabbit hole.

Apart from blinding ourselves with our chosen beliefs, one of the main problems we face trying to understand the afterlife is that we humans are singular linear-thinking 3D beings. We think in straight lines and look for cause and effect in the same way. Something like the mind split effect is way out there in the proverbial Too Hard Basket. The subtle mechanisms underlying incarnation and afterlife processes are hugely more complex. But NDE, Lucid Dreaming, Prophetic Dreams, OBE, Clairvoyance, and The Mind Split Effect, can all give us tantalizing glimpses of these spiritual processes at work.

Each afterlife experience is unique and will unfold differently for each individual, but there are some intriguing commonalities. At the moment of death, consciousness departs the physical body and begins the afterlife process. Consciousness will then progressively refine itself by slowly dividing into its separate subtle aspects. Each of these aspects exists on its own dimensional level. During physical life, all aspects are bound within the physical body/mind. At death, people shift out of their physical bodies into their Real Time Astral Bodies, where they exist for a time close to physical reality. In this state, they are like ghosts in the real world. After a time, anything from a few days to several weeks – depending on circumstances and how much life force and emotional baggage are involved – these ghostlike vehicles tire and consciousness shifts further away from the physical world. As this process continues, spirits progressively shift into higher levels of astral and mental realms, and then beyond. Some of these things appear to happen simultaneously, and this may explain how deceased persons can appear to be existing on

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multiple levels at the same time. My long-term observations show that while there are variables, the processing of life and the progression through the astral and mental planes that occur in the afterlife experience are consistent factors.

To provide context to my statements, following are some of the experiences that have led to my understanding of the OBE and afterlife processes.

Family Circus: Children and animals take OBE in their stride, including the ability to fly and move through walls. I remember an incident where I was meditating in the evening, with my three young children asleep in rooms nearby, and my black Labrador and Russian Blue cat asleep on the floor. With astral sight, I watched as my pets rose up out of their bodies' one at a time. Then my children spilled through the wall and flew in wild circles around the room, chasing each other and clamouring for attention "Watch me, daddy. I can really, really fly!" They looked ghostlike with shining faces, as if made of glowing steam. My three-year-old daughter climbed onto my lap and excitedly chattered away. They were making me dizzy with their antics. Then a strange cat slipped into the room and my dog, Blue Boy, took offence and with loud woofs he chased the intruder outside. My rambunctious children thought this was hilariously funny and soon followed suit.

Helping David: I was doing dishes in the afternoon when a heavy THUD shook the house. It sounded like a car accident; not far off I guessed. I thought nothing more of it. Twenty-minutes later a spirit slipped into my kitchen – a dark-haired young man in his early twenties looking dazed and lost. I greeted him and asked for his name. David had just been killed in the auto accident I'd heard earlier. I tenderly explained to David that he had died and was now a spirit. I told him not to worry, and that he had a few weeks where he'd be like this, close to the physical world where he could go anywhere and be with his family and friends. He should come to terms with his passing and let the world go, I added. There would come a time, I said, when he would feel very tired and the world would go out of focus. He would then fall asleep and wake up in a gorgeous spirit realm. I reassured him that the spirit realms were wonderful places and just as solid as real life. He could still get a beer, go surfing, see movies with friends and

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have fun, and that everything was free. (The afterlife is what you make of it and thinking positive and having bright expectations really helps). David looked more curious now than frightened. He thanked me and left to go home.

My Parents: My parents passed away many years ago and I have been observing them in the afterlife ever since. Dad died first, twenty-six years ago, and for the first few months I saw him around me many times. He appeared to be involved in various stages of his life. Then he slept in an astral realm for almost twenty years. I would encounter him occasionally in my astral travels and he was always deeply asleep and snoring nearby. Eventually there came times when he would awaken for short periods of time, but was always lost in thought. It was similar for my mother, fifteen years later. I saw her many times for the first year or so, at various stages of her life, and she seemed to be processing her life by reliving many segments of it. She also slept for several months. It was many years before I saw my parents together. They were young and happy, aware that they had passed over, and were enjoying richer and more-complex afterlife realms. This does not mean that they are both finished with the afterlife process. I continue to see them engaged in other areas of their lives. For example, I occasionally see my mother with her parents, and my father with his.

Note: People seem to process their most pressing emotional baggage early in the afterlife process, before exploring other areas of their lives, often working their way backwards towards childhood.

A Big Sleep: Gus was a longhaired German Shepherd and beloved member of my family. When he passed over, aged 14, I saw images of him around our home for weeks, and then started finding him in spirit realms. He slept for several years, in a similar way as my father. During OBE's and visits to the spirit worlds, I would often find him nearby in a small dugout or a cave. I'd call him and he'd wag his tail and slowly lift his sleepy head, and then fall back to sleep. Then one day during an OBE, a beautiful young German Shepherd came trotting to me. It was Gus, now in his prime and glowing with vitality. He currently lives with my mother, along with many other deceased family pets.

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Note: My experiences with watching animals project out of body, and also in the afterlife, suggests that these are natural processes that may be inherent to all life forms. I am starting to think that as animals evolve spiritually, especially as much-loved domestic pets, at some point they may incarnate as human beings.

The Afterlife Process: I have observed many people engaged in the afterlife process, including close family, friends, beloved pets, and complete strangers. Such observations are made through astral sight, clairvoyant visions, OBE's, and lucid dreams. The afterlife experience involves a perfect failsafe process in that, regardless of one's age and physical or mental condition, or one's beliefs or disbeliefs concerning the afterlife, progress will always be made sooner or later. After death, all infirmities fade away, unless these conditions are still needed and identified with.

The spirits of deceased children and babies are never separated from their parents. Babies will sleep for a time after death and then awaken in their mother's arms in a pocket reality, before progressing on to more refined spiritual realms. Babies generally have little life experience and baggage to process, so they progress rapidly. Children's parents may still be alive in the physical world, but the afterlife experience provides perfect loving copies of parents and family as needed.

Bad afterlife realms, even Hell realities, can also be created through belief, need, and expectation. If deceased people are tormented and believe they need to suffer, they can enter afterlife realms that suit their perceived needs. In this sense, suicides fare no differently than any other spirit; they just have more death drama and life baggage to deal with. In time, however, everyone makes progress. Eventually the anomalies mount up to the point where even the most detailed hellish experience will fade away and be replaced with something better – more on anomalies shortly. The length of time spirits spend in hellish realities depends on how long it takes to let go of their guilt and perceived need for punishment. For example, some people believe that after death they must wait in their graves until they hear the last trumpet. So after death they shift into a simple coffin reality where they will sleep and think and dream, and begin

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processing their lives. When they have made some progress, or get bored with this, they will start hearing voices outside and light and drafts of air will enter their coffins through cracks. Curiosity will eventually get the better of them and they'll soon start peeking. They will even hear trumpets if they need this. Eventually they will get out of their coffins and start experiencing more fulfilling afterlife realms.

Usually, after a few weeks or so in the real time astral zone, spirits tire as they run out of physical life force and shift into pocket realms within the astral planes. These pockets are usually simple illusions created partly by beliefs and expectations, and partly by events from the recent life experience, including troubles and traumas and the death drama itself. A typical pocket reality can be a house and garden, or just a single room. During this time, spirits will spend a great deal of time sleeping, thinking and dreaming. When they are rested and ready for more, they shift into more interesting levels. The length of time spirits need to spend in any stage of the afterlife process varies considerably, from days to many decades. Time is relative and it passes quite differently in the afterlife. A hundred years can seem like just a few short weeks, and a few days can seem like years.

The solidity and realness of an astral reality is absolute stunning! They are indistinguishable from normal physical reality. For this reason, most spirits do not realize that they are deceased. The events relating to their death dramas and earlier stages of the afterlife process will seem like vague dreams. In the more complex astral/mental realities life can be relived with incredible detail, with some areas of life being relived many times. This continues until each troublesome life event is processed to a comfortable level, to where spirits can let go of them and move on.

For many people, the first complex realities they experience are wonderful places, truly heavenly. For example, after the early stages of my mother's afterlife process, she shifted into a spectacular reality comprising a tiny seaside village in England. Here, she was staying with our dear friend, Selena, who had passed over several years before mum. I have visited there several times and we have tea and sandwiches and take the dogs for walks, just like we used to in real

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life. The food and drink taste deliciously real and the sea air is invigorating. This reality is being shared by Selena and my mother at times. They also occasionally get visits from other people they had known during their lives.

The Anomaly Factor: A key factor to all levels above the normal physical world, from the real time astral level to the highest spirit realm, is the anomalies. Anomalies are programmed into the fabric of nonphysical reality. They constantly tell spirits and dreamers and astral projectors that they are NOT in physical reality. For example, if you are drinking a cup of coffee, it will keep refilling itself when you are not looking. If you try to write something, the pen runs out of ink. If you decide to walk somewhere, you take only a few steps and then arrive at your destination. If you stare at something too long, it will morph and change into something else. These anomalies are just confusing oddities to begin with, but they steadily become more noticeable and thought-provoking. If anomalies are focused upon, or pushed to repeat over and over, they start breaking down. For example, if you watch your coffee cup and try to catch it refilling, then it may refill with water or sand, or the cup may change into a flower. And if you try to catch the journey between as you walk from one place to another, you may start shifting to random places, or find that the path suddenly ends at a rock-face. Anomalies are constant factors in the afterlife, as well as in OBE's and Lucid Dreams. In the afterlife experience, it eventually becomes obvious to anyone that they are no longer in the physical world. Once realized, illusions start to break down and spirits soon move on to more meaningful spiritual realities. This continues until such a time as life is fully processed and spirits are ready to completely let go of the form of physical existence.

If people have strong religious beliefs and expectations of certain forms of heavens, then at some point after death they will shift into gorgeous heavenly realms to match. These realities will last as long as they need to, from days to centuries; but eventually the constant anomalies will accomplish their purpose and the environment will start breaking down. If you have some experience with OBE and Lucid Dreaming, you will know that you can create anything that you can imagine, from a sword to a densely populated city. Knowing what lies ahead in the afterlife

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process, the necessary but boring and painful parts can be accomplished more quickly. By realizing the lessons you need to learn sooner, you can progress more quickly. The constant anomalies continually demonstrate the nature of the illusory afterlife realms – the Bardo Realms, as the Tibetan Buddhists call them – and if you take the hints provided then you can take control of these realities and create whatever environment you wish. In this way, your afterlife experience will be smooth sailing, hugely enjoyable, and immensely meaningful.

[For more on Robert Bruce and his work, see: www.AstralDynamics.com]

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