

BOOK REVIEW

Demystifying the Out-of-Body Experience: A Practical Manual for Exploration and Personal Evolution by Luis Minero. Llewellyn Publications, 2012. 403 pp. \$19.99. ISBN 978-0738730790.

I was very pleased to learn that Luis Minero had written a book on the out-of-body experience (OBE). I bought it sight unseen, and I was not disappointed. It was back in 2002 that I first came across the author's name in a correspondence to the *Journal of Conscientiology* (Minero 2002a), the peer-reviewed journal of the International Academy of Consciousness (IAC).

In that letter, Minero analyzed with great accuracy, clarity, and thoroughness, the so-called “mind-split” hypothesis, proposed by author Robert Bruce to explain some of the puzzling factors of the OBE phenomenon, such as memory loss and dual consciousness (Bruce 1999). I still remember how impressed I was when I read Minero's step-by-step refutation of Bruce's hypothesis, not only for the care and lucidity of his analysis, but also for his natural, didactical style and the balance with which he was able to strongly criticize weak points of some of the ideas presented, and at the same time give full credit to other innovative aspects of Bruce's work.

I rediscovered these same intellectual qualities in other writings of Minero, such as his suggestive essay on *lucidocracy* (Minero 2002b), a political proposal contemplating the possibility of a government system based on lucidity, with the main goal of facilitating the fulfillment of one's potential or life mission (existential program).

I would start by saying that the book's title may possibly seduce the hasty reader in error. Indeed, the *demystification* in question is not the usual one, consisting in reducing the entire OBE complex of phenomena to a mere hallucination produced by the subject's physical brain, when his or her sensory inputs are altered in some way. Minero, quite to the contrary, considers OBEs as experiences describing real projections of the human consciousness through objective subtle bodies (vehicles of manifestations), which can exist independently of the physical body.

The book's demystification is, therefore, of a very different kind: It is about those more mystic-like and folkloristic aspects that have been historically associated with the OBE phenomenon, mostly based on

immature, emotional, or superstitious thinking, and which have little to do with a more mature understanding of this fundamental topic.

A very important point to be emphasized: One can use a sound, scientific approach to the OBEs, without necessarily reducing these experiences to a mere phenomenon of autoscopy, i.e. the experiences of seeing one's physical body from an out-of-body perspective.

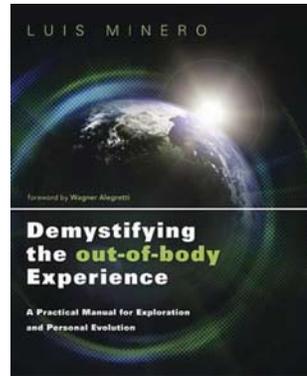
Minero stresses in many passages and chapters of his manual that the OBE is much more than this. OBEs are described as complex, highly articulated experiences, involving paramatter of a non-ordinary kind, obeying para-physical laws, different from the physical laws obeyed by the ordinary physical matter today studied by physicists.

OBEs are not characterized as the mere exteriorization of one's awareness to one's bedroom: To Minero, OBEs are about exploring physical and extraphysical environments, meeting other (more or less evolved) extraphysical (disincarnated) consciousnesses, providing assistance to intraphysical (incarnated) and extraphysical (disincarnated) beings, with the possibility of working with teams of more advanced and organized consciousnesses, which are referred to as extraphysical helpers.

Demystifying posits that OBEs are about understanding the process of death from a broader point of view, i.e. from a viewpoint that considers our biological vehicle as just one among different vehicles we can use to manifest, intelligently and self-consciously, in different existential dimensions.

Minero describes how individuals have used the OBE as inspiration for re-examining life's purpose, one's potential, or personal existential directives or priorities. Lucid projectors, those who experience OBEs frequently, often describe observing extraphysical individuals planning what they want to do when they acquire a physical "suit." That is, projectors may observe the "intermission," as Dr. Jim Tucker calls it: the period between two physical incarnations.

Minero suggests that the phenomenon of the OBE acquires all its meaning and potentiality when its theoretical study and practical experimentation is motivated by a genuine desire for achieving greater integral maturity (holomaturity), i.e. a condition of inner development that is not limited to the attributes developed in the ordinary physical world, or even just this lifetime.



The volume, which is not only an instruction manual for self-exploration of the OBE phenomenon, also acts as a guide for stimulating personal evolution. It is organized into seven well-thought-out chapters. The first one introduces the basic concepts of the proposed scientific disciplines of *projectiology* and *conscientiology*, as coined by Waldo Vieira, M.D. (Vieira 1994, 2002). The second one deals mainly with the subject of subtle energy (bioenergy, orgone, chi, biofield), and the importance of its mastery to obtain sufficiently controlled, frequent, and lucid OBEs.

Chapter 3 introduces a multi-vehicular (multiple-body, holosomatic) structure of human consciousnesses and the characteristics of many extraphysical environments described during projections. Consciousness, in this context, is seen not as a property of self, not as the physical body or any other perceived “body,” but as a synonym for the self. In this work, rather than having or experiencing consciousness (awareness), one *is* a consciousness: a novel use of the word by Minero and his colleagues.

Chapter 4 describes the different stages one may go through during an OBE. This is the chapter where the reader will find, very scrupulously described and logically organized, many different techniques one can use to achieve a lucid OBE. Chapter 5 considers many possible interactions and forms of communications projectors, including the possibility of simultaneous or joint projections, whereby two or more individuals describe meeting while they have OBEs at the same time.

Chapter 6 includes suggestive neologisms, such as *holomaturity*, *assistentiality*, *evolutionary intelligence*, and *cosmoethics*, and finally, in Chapter 7, the author investigates compelling hypotheses, always considering them from the OBE perspective: *existential program* (life mission), *existential seriality* (reincarnation, death-rebirth cycle), *intermissive courses* (the training that a consciousness possibly takes to prepare itself for rebirth), and many others as well.

The extreme care with which the book is written can be seen in the details. The volume is equipped with a very useful Glossary, with the explanation of the most important neologisms used. At the end of each chapter, there is a practical summary of the key points that have been developed, and throughout the book one can find a number of text boxes, identifiable by specific icons, providing complementary information to the text, in the form of definitions, recommendations, firsthand OBEs, challenging questions, etc. Last but not least, the book is very carefully illustrated, with professional drawings that considerably facilitate the understanding of the topics covered.

To recapitulate, this is a professionally written text. Per its aim, it is an

introductory textbook, which thanks to its pedagogical style will appeal to a wide audience. It is also, I believe, a book that will prove to be instrumental to all those scientists interested in the study of consciousness from an integral perspective, and who sincerely wish to move from the level of pure speculation, or research of third-person accounts, to that of lucid self-experimentation (first- and second-person perspective research).

Indeed, as Minero rightly emphasizes in his Preface, direct experiences should be the first step toward a more mature understanding and study of OBEs and allied phenomena. And his volume is certainly a precious tool that can be used by scholars of all kinds to take a first step in that direction. This will help create a more ample, consensual basis for the discussion of the reality of the OBE, considering also that there is a small, but growing number of scholars who take seriously the importance of firsthand experience when the subject of the study is . . . oneself.

Now, while it is true that today's predominant scientific approach remains quite cold regarding disciplined self-study and self-experimentation of consciousness, it is also true that the current scientific debate is increasingly based on experimental evidence, so that more and more researchers are starting to become more open to the possibility of engaging in first-person investigation of the hypothesis of the multi-dimensional nature of consciousness. When these researchers look for a reference manual, written in a sincere, and yet non-reductionist style, they will find in Minero's book a valuable companion. Surely, from now on, it will be the book I will recommend to those who ask me for a highly readable and professionally written reference on the subject.

Let me conclude by observing that, in the same way a beginning student of, say, quantum mechanics, has to undertake a long journey of study to obtain firsthand understanding, including acquiring all the necessary preliminary knowledge in physics and advanced mathematics, so too with regard to the possibility of reaching a direct understanding of the OBE phenomenon, which also requires a considerable amount of personal investment to develop those preliminary abilities described in this work (for example, the control of bioenergy). Without this discipline, it remains quite difficult to achieve sufficiently lucid, meaningful, frequent, recalled OBEs. The more individuals who can reach this degree of mastery, the more experiments can be repeated and reproduced.

To quote Minero:

In this current world of fast, easy solutions and short-term fixes, there are still no substitutes for personal effort, will, perseverance, and patience.

And the subjective and intersubjective investigation of the full multidimensional content of the OBE phenomenon posited in this work is no exception.

MASSIMILIANO SASSOLI DE BIANCHI

Laboratorio di Autoricerca di Base, 6914 Carona, Switzerland

References

- Minero, L. (2002a). Letter to the Editor. *Journal of Conscientiology*, 5(17), 63–71.
- Minero, L. (2002b). "Lucidocracy," *Journal of Conscientiology*, 4(15S), 47–65.
- Bruce, R. (1999). *Astral Dynamics*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- Vieira, W. (1994). *700 Conscientiology Experiments [700 Experimentos da Conscientiologia* (in Portuguese)]. Rio de Janeiro: International Institute of Projectiology and Conscientiology.
- Vieira, W. (2002). *Projectiology: A Panorama of Experiences of the Consciousness Outside the Human Body*. Rio de Janeiro: International Institute of Projectiology and Conscientiology.