


Hypnotically Induced Out-of-Body Experience: How Many Bodies Are There? Unexpected Discoveries About the Subtle Body and Psychic Body

SAGE Open
 October-December 2015: 1–11
 © The Author(s) 2015
 DOI: 10.1177/2158244015615919
 sgo.sagepub.com


Patrizio E. Tressoldi¹, Luciano Pederzoli², Patrizio Caini²,
 Alessandro Ferrini², Simone Melloni², Elena Prati²,
 Diana Richeldi², Florentina Richeldi², and Alice Trabucco²

Abstract

The possibility to induce real out-of-body experiences (OBEs) using hypnotic inductions, with the opportunity to interview participants during their experience, permits to investigate in depth the characteristics of different aspects of this particular state of consciousness from a first-person point of view. In this article, six selected participants report the description of another “body” we named “subtle body,” identified as an intermediate entity between the physical body (Pb) and their “Self” or “I-identity” that was named “psychic body,” and their relationships and characteristics. The “subtle body” was described as a sort of white silvered cloud surrounding the Pb, with a particular enlargement of its hands and feet that could move quickly like flying from one place to another even if less easily than the “psychic body,” and a vague sense of attrition was perceived when passing through walls. Similar to the “psychic body,” the “subtle” one too could move forward and backward in time even if they did not seem perceiving the sense of time. The “subtle body” was referred to be connected with the physical one by a sort of white brilliant link sometimes described like a silvered string more or less visible, whereas no visible links were identified between the “subtle body” and the “psychic” one. These reports were compared with similar descriptions deriving from the Vedanta philosophy and Theosophical tradition.

Keywords

hypnosis, out-of-body experience, physical body, psychic body

Introduction

The out-of-body experience (OBE) is a multifaceted experience whose core characteristic is a first personal perspective in which the “self,” “himself,” or “center of consciousness” is experienced as spatially separated from the body (Carruthers, 2015; Metzinger, 2005; Terhune, 2009). This particular state of consciousness attracts much interest spanning from the philosophy of mind, to neurophysiology, and to the study of consciousness in general (see Alvarado, 2009; Cardeña & Alvarado, 2014, for a review).

Usually, such an experience occurs either as an uncontrolled, spontaneous event (Blanke & Castillo, 2007; Braithwaite, Samson, Apperly, Broglia, & Hulleman, 2011; Cardeña, 2005) and are all based on the participants’ verbal reporting obtained by questionnaires or interviews carried out after and not during this experience.

The possibility to induce real OBE using hypnotic inductions, with the possibility to interview participants during their

experience, offers a unique opportunity to investigate in detail this state of consciousness for a prolonged time in a controlled way.

Hypnotic induced OBE (Cardeña, 2005; Nash, Lynn, & Stanley, 1984; Tart, 1998; Tressoldi & Del Prete, 2007) are rare, given the necessity to recruit expert hypnotists and in particular participants willing and ready to face such a special experience.

In a related article, Tressoldi et al. (2014) investigated the accuracy of perceiving distant and the first-person phenomenological experience of five selected participants with respect to the minimal phenomenal selfhood (MPS) as defined by Blanke

¹Università di Padova, Italy

²EvanLab, Firenze, Italy

Corresponding Author:

Patrizio E. Tressoldi, Università di Padova, via Venezia 8, Padova 35131, Italy.

Email: patrizio.tressoldi@unipd.it



Table 1. Participants' Chronological and Experience With OBE and Hypnosis Characteristics.

ID	Sex	Age	Previous OBE experience	Previous OBE knowledge	Hypnosis experience (years)	Hypnotic susceptibility
S	M	26	No	High	2	8
Al	M	30	No	High	2	8
A	F	32	No	High	2	8
F	F	53	Yes	High	10	9
E	F	41	No	Low	0	7
D	F	26	No	Low	2	9

Note. OBE = out-of-body experience.

and Metzinger (2009) and the similarities with the characteristics of spatial and temporal perception reported in near-death experiences (NDEs).

The first-person reports of all five participants suggested the existence of a disembodied personal selfhood (DPS) characterized by the experience of being a distinct, holistic entity with self-control and learning capabilities implying the concept of *ability to experience and participate in events*, without a body or location in space–time. This entity is able to perceive simply by an act of will without the physical limitations of eyesight, is able to move about in the environment instantly, and exists in a sort of three-dimensional world with no perception of time.

During the participants' training, the hypnotist noticed that some of them perceived a type of secondary body, an intermediate between the physical body (Pb) and the DPS. It was therefore decided to investigate this presumed new non-Pb using a semistructured interview.

In this article, we report the first-person verbal reports of how those participants plus a new one, described this body, which was simply named "subtle body" (Sb) to differ it from the Pb and from the center of consciousness or first-person perspective we named "psychic body" (Ψ b) plus the interaction among them.

The literature about the identification of different bodies in OBE is mainly based on some autobiographical reports (see Alvarado's (2012) analysis of Robert Crookall work), survey literature, and other questionnaire studies that give some information about the bodies perceived by people during OBEs (e.g., Alvarado & Zingrone, 2015). Consequently, the models to explain these bodies have not been developed in terms of testable hypotheses up today. Given this situation, our study has to be considered as an exploratory investigation aimed at bringing a further contribution to the knowledge of this fascinating phenomenon.

Method

Participants

Six people took part in this study, five of whom were also included in a related article by Tressoldi et al. (2014).

They were chosen because they were accustomed to hypnosis, their experience ranging from 2 to 10 years. Their individual levels of hypnotic susceptibilities were estimated using the Italian version of the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A (Pascalis, Russo, & Marucci, 2000).

The participants' previous knowledge of the OBE subject was determined by asking them how many books, videos, reports, or articles they have read regarding this state of consciousness. Those with no previous interest in, or reading of, the subject were classified as "low," and those with a keen interest who had read extensively on the subject were classified as "high."

Their demographical and general characteristics are reported in Table 1. Coauthor L.P., with more than 20 years' experience in hypnosis, had the role of hypnotist.

Procedure

For a more detailed description of the general hypnotic procedure and the specific OBE induction process, see the above-mentioned previous study by Tressoldi et al. (2014).

Before beginning the official experiment, all the participants underwent one or two sessions per week to become accustomed to the procedure and OBE suggestions, until the hypnotist deemed them ready for the official study.

To prepare the participants, an average of four sittings specifically dedicated to the OBE were necessary. Each participant did a minimum of two official sittings, up to a maximum of six.

OBE hypnotic induction procedure. All the sessions were completed either in a lightproof and partially soundproof laboratory or in the participants' homes. When the participants were at home, the session was conducted over the telephone. They lay on a recliner with a digital recorder beside them or the telephone to record their words.

Once the hypnotist was satisfied that the participant had reached an appropriate hypnotic state, the OBE induction would commence, and when attainment of that state was also confirmed, questions would be posed to the participant (see Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' Replies to Questions Regarding the Pb, the Sb, and the Ψb, and Their Mutual Relationships.

Question	A	AL	F	S	E	D
Are you able to see your hands and/or feet and/or body?	I felt them first and then I saw my feet and hands. I can see my hands and barely see my feet. I can see my arms.	Yes.	I felt my hands and feet at first, then I saw them and they looked padded. Yes, I can see my hands and feet, and I can feel my body. Yes, more so my hands.	Yes I see a vague human form, poorly defined. I can see them but they are out of focus. At first I could not, but after I pulled my Sb out of my Pb, I could.	Yes, it looks silvery. They are silver.	Yes I can, but they are not solid. Not at first, but I did after I was told to pull out the Sb.
How big is the Sb with respect to the Pb?	It is larger than the Pb. It seems larger. The hands seem extended.	It is larger than the Pb.	Larger. It seems larger than the Pb, surrounded by a mist-like energy.	A little bit larger than the Pb. It is bigger as if it has clothes.	Almost like the Pb but with a different thickness.	It is larger than the Pb. It has very big hands and even bigger feet. It is very big.
What does it look like and what is its consistency?	It is white. A thin consistency like cream. It is the same color as cream but feels like a cloud. The hands are a light milky color and feel like vapor.	I see a nonmaterial double of myself which is able to sense things. It is transparent. Somewhat resembles a liquid.	It is like a cloud. The hands are whitish and transparent. It is mostly white with a pink-purple outline. It seems gaseous. I can see layers. I see an outer bright shell and there seems to be others inside which are duller and look like smoke. They are bigger than the Pb.	The body is like a stylized drawing and seems fluid-like. When it goes through the rocks it feels a slight scratching but does not sense their temperature. It is opaque. Reminds me of fog. It is fluffy like a cloud.	Roughly like the Pb only translucent. Its features look like mine. It has the consistency of a TV image.	It is light-blue. It looks like a cloud. It is transparent with an outline. I can see through it. It is weightless. It is transparent and has no texture.
Can you travel freely with the Sb?	It seems to slow down when it passes through matter.	Yes, I feel no limitations.	It seems slower than the Ψb.	It seems very connected to the Pb. I do not have much freedom.	Yes.	Yes, very fast.
What level of awareness does the Sb have?	I do not know.	More than the Pb; it sees dimensions differently.	It has more capabilities than the Pb because it sees time and space, but is more limited than the Ψb.	Same as the normal one.		Greater than the Pb.
What role does the Sb?	It is a type of permanent glue connecting the Pb and Ψb. Without it, the Ψb could not control the Pb. It is nonpermanent. It lives more than the Pb, and after that it fades away.	The Sb acts as an intermediary between the Pb (the worker) and the pure awareness of the Ψb. It is still connected to the Pb, specially in time.	It serves as a link between the Pb and the Ψb. After death, one can choose to remain linked to its memories, thus creating a ghost, which slowly fades away. The Ψb on the other hand detaches permanently. It stores the memories from its union with the Ψb. It has a limited life span which is dependent on how evolved the Ψb is after it leaves the Pb. The Ψb though is eternal.	It controls the Pb, determining how it functions: as if the cells, in order to work properly, have to be connected energetically. Via the vortices (chakras), it is a type of interface between the material and nonmaterial, created by the Ψb to assist it. It is similar to a computer's Basic Input-Output System. When the Pb dies, it is left to itself to slowly dissolve.		It has greater powers of perception. It allows the Pb to increase its awareness and adapt better to the environment.
How do you see colors with the Sb?	They seem faded even when I look closely.	Not as sharp.	Some colors are very bright, others faded. There are more intense than in the Pb.	I see them very well, but they are fuller and independent of surrounding light. The colors of what I focus on are clear, but seem different to real ones. I see colors like in the Pb, but all are brighter and no shadows.	I find it difficult to see them; everything seems black and white.	They are purer, but I see everything superimposed. It looks blurred. Clear but intense, fuller than with the Pb.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Question	A	AL	F	S	E	D
How do you see objects (such as plants, houses, etc.) with the Sb?	Whatever I focus on is clear.	Less sharp, maybe because they are unimportant.	At first I see them from above as from a satellite, then if I zoom in on something I feel an attraction to it and I can then see all the details.	Whatever I look at is well defined and I see everything clearly.	Not as well as I can with the Pb.	Everything is in focus. I can even see things from the inside—I can feel their consistency and can feel what they are made of. I cannot do it with the Ψ b.
How do you move about with the Sb?	I will it.	I am horizontal. I feel like I am rolling. Almost like crawling. I can move at will a body which seems almost gelatinous.	I intend it and I get there in zero time.	I fly. I simply have the thought and I can do it.	I feel clumsy moving about in a human form.	I fly. I can initiate motion with my intention. I am light and I can go through everything.
Are you bothered by “flying” at a high altitude with your Sb?	I like it.	No, because it does not feel like flying.	Absolutely not.	No.		No.
What type of emotions does the Sb feel?	I do not know.	I feel lighter. I can sense feelings and emotions.	I would not use the term emotion, it is more an attraction for something or other. Emotions belong to the Ψ b, as long as it is attached to the Pb. Emotions are felt if the Pb is present too.	It does not really feel emotions. I do not think it does. Emotions are for the Pb and consciousness.		They are not real emotions, they are lighter, and I can feel them all together, but not in their fullness. I can sense them but there is no need to.
How does the Ψ b see colors?	Brighter. Clearer.	Sharper than in the Sb.	Different from those seen in the Sb: they are more intense.	They are different; they seem pure, independent of light, but have an order of importance. The colors are more homogeneous and change hue, due to something other than the quality of light.	I see them better than I do with the Sb: they look like those I see with the Pb, but their intensity is reduced.	Darker and blurrier than with the Sb.
How does the Ψ b see objects (plants, houses, etc.)?	Perfectly defined. Everything is more defined.	Clearer.	I can see the background energy better with the Ψ b. With the Sb I see another type of energy.		I have a better sense of space and volume.	Everything seems bigger and stretched. I can feel the consistency of things without touching them.
How does the Ψ b move?	By willpower.	Instantly, by thinking it.	It is much faster—A higher level.	By willpower.	Just by thinking about it.	By its intention.
Does it bother you to “fly” at a high altitude with the Ψ b?	It feels normal.	No.	Altitude has no meaning; it is like a different dimension.	No.		No.
What type of emotions does the Ψ b feel?	Balance. There are no emotions to sort out, everything is peaceful. It is almost an absence of emotions.	There are no emotions.	There are not any emotions, only magnified events.	It seems to feel emotions.		They are not called emotions or feelings: they are perceptions.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Question	A	AL	F	S	E	D
Which non-Pb allows you to see colors better?	I do not know. I would say the Ψ b.	The Sb.	With the Sb. They are more vivid than with the Pb.	Some things are clearer with the Ψ b, but I have to get close. Other things are less clear, but I can see it without moving. Colors are better with the Pb. The other two bodies see differently, but the Sb one sees things best. The Ψ b knows more.		The Sb.
Which non-Pb allows better movement?	The Ψ b.	The Ψ b.	The Ψ b.	The Ψ b.	The Ψ b because the Sb is like a dead weight.	The Ψ b.
Which non-Pb allows you to go through objects better?	I can go through them with the Sb; with the Ψ b I can go over them instantly.	The Ψ b. The other seems to produce some friction.	The Ψ b. The Sb is slower—it is not needed for motion. The Ψ b, because I do not even need to pass through objects, I am just there instantly.	The Ψ b. With the Sb there is some friction. There is no friction with the Ψ b.	I do not feel anything when I go through walls with the Sb.	The Sb. With the Ψ b on the other hand I am there instantly without having to pass through anything.
Which non-Pb allows you to perceive people better?	The Sb.	The Ψ b.	The Sb, but it depends on how interested I am in the person.	I can see them better with the Sb, but I sense them better with the Ψ b.		The Ψ b.
How many other bodies are there, apart from the Pb and the Sb?	I do not see any others.	There might be some others.	I can see many others—it depends on the individual's evolution. Other than the three basic ones, I can see another four.	There are others, but when I try to see them I come up against a barrier.		There are another eight apart from the Pb. The highest one controls the others. All together there are 12. The other nine are all more sophisticated than the three basic ones.
When you are in the Sb are you aware of the Ψ b?	No.	Not as such, but I become aware of it when I feel the limitations of this body I am in now.	I seem to sense a higher level.	Yes, I am. It is as if the Ψ b was wearing the Sb.		No, they are separated.
Is the Ψ b aware of the possible existence of superior bodies?	I do not know if they exist. If they did, they would be experienced.	Maybe. I cannot see them, but I get the feeling there are other "dimensions" out there.	Yes, there are seven of them excluding the Pb. The Ψ b knows everything it needs to know, it is eternal and independent of everything.	It knows there are many others. The Ψ b is part of a higher level, no longer a body. The higher ones are not real bodies, they are like a localized electric discharge, something electric. The higher essence is made of many Ψ b, like many incarnations all together.	Yes, but I cannot describe them because they are formless and I cannot see them. I get a sense of one level above the Ψ b. It is like a helmsman for the others—it knows the course and where to go.	Yes, there are 13, Pb included.
Does the Ψ b need the Sb to control the Pb or can it do it by itself?		No, the Sb is not necessary.	Both the Ψ b and the Sb can use the Pb independently.	It can manage it directly, but I do not know if the commands must go through the Sb.	I think the Ψ b may act directly on the Pb.	It can do it irrespective of the other.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Question	A	AL	F	S	E	D
Can the Sb interact with matter?	Yes, because I can sense objects as I go through them.	I do not know.	I think so. It seems easier with glass objects.	I do not know.	No.	I am able to feel an object, I can hold it in my hand but it takes a big effort to move it a little because it seems very heavy.
Can the Ψb interact with the matter?	No, it is not its nature to do so.	No.	No, it is not interested in it.	I do not know.	Yes, if I think about moving a glass. The laws which apply to the Pb do not apply to the Ψb. I think it would be capable of moving an object through will.	No, the Sb acts a little like the Pb, but the Ψb does not have a prehensile organ. It thinks about what it wants to do and does it.
While you are living in the Pb, what roles do the other two bodies have?	They are independent but connected. The Pb is the means, the Sb the command, the Ψb governs and is eternal. The Ψb gives out an intention, the Sb turns it into a command for the Pb which then carries it out.		Both the Sb and Ψb are usually wrapped around the Pb. The Ψb governs the other two.	They sustain it; without them the Pb would have a bad time of it.	The Sb governs the Pb and sooner or later must go back, because something important awaits it. The Ψb and Sb mutually interact in the present incarnation.	The "outer" bodies are like layers over the Pb; they usually surround it.
How is the Ψb connected to the Sb?	It is a mutual attraction.	By a type of silver rope.	With a (silver) rope.	By a type of cylindrical vortex; a white spinning rope.	I can see a sort of very thin almost invisible silvery thread.	I see a sort of powder, a sort of mist which connects them.
How is the Sb connected to the Ψb?	There is no visible connection.	There is something surrounding the Ψb, but there is no visible connection.	There is no visible connection.	With the same vortex described previously.	I cannot see a connection. It is not something concrete. Seems to be just a product of expectation.	I do not see anything.
Can the Sb perceive what people think?	No, it perceives emotions.	Not too well.	It gets feelings.	No, because it is only "clothing."		No, it feels emotions.
Can the Ψb Perceive what people think?	Yes, their thoughts and will.	It has a kind of empathy. It feels people's moods.	Yes.	Yes, both thoughts and emotions.		Yes.
Within which body are the events of the present life stored?	Within the Ψb, but this memory can be stored in the two other bodies too.	I think within all three.	Within the Sb.	Within both the Sb and the Ψb, but also in the physic one, although limited to things which concern it directly (e.g., sport).	Within both the Pb and the Sb.	More so in the Pb.
Which body carries the memories of past lives?	The Ψb.	Both the Sb and Ψb.	The Ψb.	None of the three. The Ψb is like a small part of a larger one composed of all lives, but as far as we are concerned, the current life is the main one.	Only the Ψb.	Both the Sb and the Ψb to differing degrees.

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Question	A	AL	F	S	E	D
Which body is responsible for our reasoning ability?	The Sb is not very intellectual.	The Ψb is capable of thinking in the abstract. The Sb comes into play when there is contact with other dimensions (e.g., in dreams). The Ψb reasons.	It is in the Pb too, but is shared. The engine is the Ψb.	It is a synergic process that involves all three bodies, although not always completely coordinated.		Both the Pb and the Sb.
Which body holds the capacity to invent new things?	The Ψb, which has sophisticated thinking abilities, if it is free of the Pb and Sb.	The Ψb.		The creative process involves all three bodies. They have to all be prepared and well-coordinated. For example, the Pb can decide what to eat, but if we imagine three pipes (the three bodies) connected one after the other, all three pipes need to be clean and unblocked, otherwise all the water (creativity) will not flow through.	The Sb even if sometimes I seem to have access to the Ψb's database.	Both the Pb and the Sb.
Are you able to go back in time?	I do not know.	Yes, maybe a few months. Yes, with both the Sb and Ψb.	I can travel back in time three months.	It is difficult to travel in time with the Sb.	Yes, however far I want.	Yes.
Can you go forward in time?	I think so.	Yes.	Yes, I can see sunflowers (several months ahead).	I cannot find any points of reference where I am. I can travel a little, maybe about three days, then the future dissolves.	Yes, however far I want.	Yes. But I do not know how far.

Note. Pb = physical body; Sb = subtle body; Ψb = psychic body. Answers in bold type were determined to be the participants' general consensus.

All the participants were asked the same questions in the same order, in the form of a semistructured interview. Sometimes the hypnotist found it necessary to repeat a question to ensure it was understood or to rephrase it for ease of comprehension.

Original audio recordings (in Italian) can be found in Tressoldi (2013). Transcripts in English are currently underway.

All participants agreed on not sharing their experiences with the others until the end of the study to prevent possible contamination of their responses.

Analysis of participants' answers. All the questions and answers were transcribed by L.P. and qualitatively analyzed independently by P.E.T. and L.P. by relistening to the original recordings and examining the contents according to Krippendorff's (2013) guidelines. Overall agreement was 90%. Interpretative inconsistencies were resolved by once again listening to the recordings.

Results

Table 2 is a summary of each participant's exact words in reply to each question. More than one answer to a question indicates the same question was asked in different sessions. Answers in bold type were determined to be the participants' general consensus. We considered overall agreement to have been reached when the same answer was given by at least five out of six participants, or four out of five if one of them failed to answer. The last two participants, E and D, had the least previous knowledge of OBEs.

Comments

More detailed comments about each question are presented in the appendix. The overall agreement between the two judges was 81%, and the main discrepancies between them were due

to variations in interpretation of the answers regarding perception and the roles of the Sb and psychic body (Ψ b).

It is important to remember that where there was agreement, the differences in previous OBE knowledge among participants had no effect on the answers.

Descriptions and Characteristics of the Sb Compared With the Pb and Ψ b

Descriptions of the Sb's characteristics are uniform among the participants: This body was described as a type of silvery-white cloud surrounding the Pb and is wider around the hands and feet.

Agreement to a lesser degree was obtained regarding its perceptive characteristics: around half the replies stated that colors and shapes were more easily perceived and were more vivid and intense than in the Pb, whereas the other half described them as being less bright or in black and white.

However, shapes and colors were described as being brighter, clearer, and more intense when perceived through the Ψ b.

With respect to how the Sb feels emotions or senses others' emotions, virtually all participants agreed that, like the Ψ b, the Sb either does not feel them at all or feels them less intensely than the Pb, but it seems that only the Ψ b is able to perceive others' thoughts.

With respect to the motion properties of the Sb, there was general agreement that it can move quickly from one place to another, like flying, albeit less easily than the Ψ b, and that mild friction is felt when passing through walls.

Like the Ψ b, the Sb can also move back and forth in time, but does not appear to have an actual sense of real time.

It is unclear whether or not the Sb is able to interact with the physical (material) environment: when attempted, it is described as very difficult, although easier than with the Ψ b.

Role of the Sb and Its Differences to the Ψ b

The main purpose of the Sb seems to be the regulation of the Pb's biological functions and aiding the Ψ b's interaction with the Pb, even though it appears that the Ψ b is capable of directly interacting with it.

The descriptions confirm that the Sb is connected to the Pb by something bright that is sometimes defined as a barely visible silvery string. No perceivable connections were described between the Sb and Ψ b.

The Sb's existence has been described as finite in time, but of longer duration than the Pb, whereas the Ψ b's existence was said to be infinite in time. Less agreement emerged from the questions related to in which body the memory for present and past lives is stored and where reasoning and creativity come from. There was an agreement on the fact that the Pb was the less endowed with respect to the Sb and the Ψ b.

Less agreement emerged from answers to questions concerning which body stores memories of the current and past

lives, as well as the origin of creativity and reasoning capacities. There was agreement on the fact that the Pb has fewer capabilities than the Sb and Ψ b.

Are There Other Bodies?

When asked if the Ψ b is aware of other bodies apart from the Pb and Sb, the answers concur about the existence of "superior Bodies," or rather, "superior entities"—given their lack of boundaries, like the Ψ b—but their exact number and functions remain unknown.

Discussion

Only a few questions elicited overall agreement in the answers, regardless of participants' previous knowledge of this subject, but there was agreement regarding the existence of at least two "bodies" other than the Pb, which we have called the Sb and Ψ b.

If necessary, the DPS can inhabit either of the two bodies, even though it prefers the Ψ b, which is described as the overseer of the Sb and Pb, and probably exists eternally.

Although the perceptive and cognitive differences between the Sb and the Ψ b have not been clearly defined, the differences in how they "move through space" were described the same way by all participants: The Ψ b seems to travel at the speed of thought, or will, with no "friction" from solid materials. Similar, but less ideal, characteristics are described for the Sb, due to it having boundaries. Furthermore, all descriptions about the link between the Pb and the Sb were in agreement.

The descriptions cited here about both the Sb and the Ψ b bring to mind those mentioned in several philosophical/spiritual traditions. For example, the Vedanta philosophy identifies three different bodies that have much in common with the Pb (*Sthula Sarira*), the Sb (*Sukshma Sarira*), and the Ψ b (*Karana Sarira*) as described by our participants (Three Bodies Doctrine (Vedanta), 2015).

Similar, but not identical, descriptions are defined in the Theosophical tradition, which combines Western Occultism and Oriental Philosophy (Ellwood, 1986). In this spiritual tradition, the three bodies are described as the *Linga Sarira* (or astral body), the *Mayavi-rupa* (the illusory body), and the causal body (vehicle for the Superior Mind). Of these, the astral body somewhat resembles the Sb and the causal body resembles the Ψ b (see a more detailed description in Besant, 1912).

Bearing in mind the known uncertainties inherent in first-person phenomenological descriptions, the information given by our participants about their OBE experiences induced by an hypnotic induction can be used for the time being as a new source of description of this particular state of consciousness as a converging evidence to other sources obtained with different methods (see, for example, Alvarado, 2012).

This may be useful to future investigators who are interested in traveling to these new "territories" of human existence.

Appendix

Table A1. Comments for Each Question.

Questions	Comments
Can you see hands, feet, and/or the body? How big is the Sb with respect to the Pb?	All participants can at least see a part of the Sb. The Sb's dimensions are usually estimated as being a little bigger than those of the Pb, but with a poorly defined edge.
What does the Sb look like and what does it feel like?	The Sb is always described as visible and light-colored, with a roughly human form, but with a liquid, or gas-like, consistency.
Can you move freely with the Sb?	There is agreement on the Sb's ability to move rapidly, but some say it slows down when passing through solid matter.
What level of awareness does the Sb have?	Although there is no real agreement, it seems the Sb has a superior knowledge to the Pb.
What role does the Sb have?	The Sb's role with respect to the Pb is variously described, even though it represents a type of intermediary between the Pb and the Ψ b. Once the Pb is dead, the Sb seems to slowly dissolve, as opposed to the Ψ b, which continues to exist.
How do you see colors with the Sb?	There is no agreement on this. It seems that the intensity of the colors depends on the degree of one's attention to them.
How do you see objects (such as plants, houses, etc.) with the Sb?	As for previous question.
How does the Sb move about?	There is general agreement on the Sb's ability to move rapidly, but some say it slows down when going through matter.
Does it bother you to "fly" at a high altitude with the Sb?	Nobody claims to be bothered by this.
What type of emotions does the Sb feel?	Answers vary, although there is some agreement on the fact that the Sb feels no emotions like those felt by the Pb.
How does the Ψb see colors?	There is general agreement that the Ψb distinguishes colors and that they are "pure," or independent of light, and if anything their purity is in proportion to the perceiver's level of interest.
How does the Ψb see objects (e.g., plants, houses, etc.)?	See previous question.
How does the Ψb move around?	There is general agreement: either with intention or volition.
Does flying at a high altitude with the Ψb bother you?	There is general agreement here: absolutely no bother because the Ψb's motion cannot be described as "flight."
What type of emotions does the Ψb feel?	There is general agreement that it does not feel emotions, but instead something similar to perception.
Which non-Pb allows you to see colors better?	It seems to be the Sb.
Which non-Pb allows you to see objects better (i.e., plants, houses, etc.)?	The answers vary, but what is interesting is that "details are sharper with the Sb. With the Ψ b their history is more defined."
In which non-Pb can you move around better?	The general consensus is the Ψb
In which non-Pb can you go through objects better?	There is general agreement on the fact that the Ψb is able to go through physical barriers with greater ease than the Sb.
Which non-Pb allows you to better perceive people?	There is no consensus on this point.
How many other bodies are there apart from the Pb and the Sb?	The answers vary, but this one is interesting: "There are others, but when I try to see them I come up against a barrier."
When you are in the Sb, are you aware of the Pb?	There is no agreement on this point.
Is the Ψb aware of the possible existence of superior bodies?	There is general agreement on the awareness of the existence of superior bodies, but much disagreement about how many.
Does the Ψb need the Sb to control the Pb, or can it do it by itself?	There is an overall consensus that the Ψb can interact directly with the Pb.
Can the Sb interact with matter?	It is very doubtful. If it can interact, it seems to require much effort.

(continued)

Appendix

Questions	Comments
Can the Ψ b interact with matter?	There is no general consensus.
While you are living in the Pb, what roles do the other two bodies have?	The descriptions vary, but it appears that both the Ψ b and Sb represent a type of container for the Pb that allow it to function.
How is the Pb connected to the Sb?	There is agreement about a type of whitish-silver rope, but details vary.
How is the Sb connected to the Ψb?	There is general agreement on there being a connection, but it is not perceptible.
Can the Sb perceive what people think?	There is no agreement on this point.
Can the Ψb perceive what people think?	There is agreement on the fact that the Ψb can perceive people's thoughts.
Within which body are the events of the present life stored?	There is no agreement on this point.
Which body carries the memories of past lives?	There is no agreement on this, even if the Ψ b seems to be the best candidate.
Which body is responsible for our reasoning ability?	There is no agreement on this point, even though the Ψ b seems to be the best endowed.
Which body holds the capacity to invent new things?	Answers vary, although it seems that the creative process requires the coordination of all three bodies.
Are you able to go back in time?	The overall answer is positive.
Are you able to travel forward in time?	As for previous question.

Note. Questions and answers in bold type are those that satisfied the general agreement criterium (5/6 or 4/5 similar answers); Pb = physical body, Sb = subtle body, Ψ b = psychic body.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the useful suggestions and comments of Carlos Alvarado to the previous version of the article. English translation by C. Evangelista (Melbourne, Australia).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

References

- Alvarado, C. S. (2009). Early and modern developments in the psychological approach to out-of-body experiences. In C. D. Murray (Ed.), *Psychological scientific perspectives on out of body and near death experiences* (pp. 1-22). New York, NY: Nova Science.
- Alvarado, C. S. (2012). Explorations of the features of out-of-body experiences: An overview and critique of the work of Robert Crookall. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 76*, 65-82.
- Alvarado, C. S., & Zingrone, N. L. (2015). Features of out-of-body experiences: Relationships to frequency, willfulness and previous knowledge about the experience. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 79*, 98-111.
- Besant, A. (1912). *Man and his bodies*. Chennai, India: The Theosophical Publishing House. Retrieved from http://www.anandgholap.net/Man_And_His_Bodies-AB.htm#
- Blanke, O., & Castillo, V. (2007). Clinical neuroimaging in epileptic patients with autoscopic hallucinations and out-of-body experiences. *Epileptologie, 24*, 90-96.
- Blanke, O., & Metzinger, T. (2009). Full-body illusions and minimal phenomenal selfhood. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 13*, 7-13.
- Braithwaite, J. J., Samson, D., Apperly, I., Brogna, E., & Hulleman, J. (2011). Cognitive correlates of the spontaneous out-of-body experience (OBE) in the psychologically normal population: Evidence for an increased role of temporal-lobe instability, body-distortion processing, and impairments in own-body transformations. *Cortex, 47*, 839-853.
- Cardeña, E. (2005). The phenomenology of deep hypnosis: Quiescent and physically active. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, 53*, 37-59.
- Cardeña, E., & Alvarado, C. (2014). Anomalous self and identity experiences. In E. Cardeña, S. J. Lynn, & S. Krippner (Eds.), *Varieties of anomalous experience: Examining the scientific evidence* (2nd ed., pp. 175-212). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Carruthers, G. (2015). Who am I in out of body experiences? Implications from OBEs for the explanandum of a theory of self-consciousness. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 14*, 183-197.
- Ellwood, R. S. (1986). *Theosophy: A modern expression of the wisdom of the ages*. Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House.
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Metzinger, T. (2005). Out-of-body experiences as the origin of the concept of a "soul." *Mind and Matter, 3*, 57-84.
- Nash, M. R., Lynn, S. J., & Stanley, S. M. (1984). The direct hypnotic suggestion of altered mind/body perception. *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis, 27*, 95-102.

- Pascalis, V. D., Russo, P., & Marucci, F. S. (2000). Italian norms for the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A. *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 48, 44-55.
- Tart, C. T. (1998). Six studies of out-of-body experiences. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 17, 73-99.
- Terhune, D. B. (2009). The incidence and determinants of visual phenomenology during out-of-body experiences. *Cortex*, 45, 236-242.
- Three Bodies Doctrine (Vedanta). (2015). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Bodies_Doctrine_\(Vedanta\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Bodies_Doctrine_(Vedanta))
- Tressoldi, P. (2013). *OBERecordsImages*. figshare. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.881821>
- Tressoldi, P., & Del Prete, G. (2007). ESP under hypnosis: The role of induction instructions and personality characteristics. *Journal of Parapsychology*, 71, 125-137.
- Tressoldi, P., Pederzoli, C., Caini, P., Ferrini, A., Melloni, S., Richeldi, D., . . . Trabucco, A. (2014). *Out of body experience induced by hypnotic suggestion: Phenomenology and perceptual characteristics*. Retrieved from <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2443719>

Author Biographies

Patrizio E. Tressoldi, PhD, is a full time researcher at Dipartimento di Psicologia Generale of Padova University. Italy. His main research interests focus on the nonlocal characteristics of human mind and on quantum cognition. Website: <http://www.psy.unipd.it/~tressold>

Luciano Pederzoli, M. Eng. (Electronics), University of Bologna (1971), Italy, is professional Chartered Engineer, was formerly designer of numerically-controlled industrial machines. Luciano

Pederzoli is an expert in research-oriented hypnosis. Website: <http://www.evanlab.org/?lang=en>

Patrizio Caini, PhD in Clinical and Experimental Medicine, University of Florence, Italy, is a freelance journalist, secondary school teacher, Has certification in F.A.C.S. (Facial Action Coding System) and Non-Verbal Communication.

Alessandro Ferrini, Master of Sociology and Social Research, Faculty of Sociology, University of Trento, Italy. Alessandro Ferrini is a social researcher, specializing in elicitation of knowledge by means of qualitative and quantitative methods. Ferrini has certification in F.A.C.S. (Facial Action Coding System) and Non-Verbal Communication.

Simone Melloni, Bachelor of Internet Science, Faculty of Science, University of Bologna, Italy. Melloni is a research associate at the Department of General Psychology, University of Padova, Italy and has Certification in F.A.C.S. (Facial Action Coding System) and Non-Verbal Communication

Elena Prati, has done MSc in Business Administration from University of Bologna (1997), majored in Company Management (1999). Prati is a finance manager.

Diana Richeldi, is student of Naturopathy specializing in Bioenergetics and Environment, ANEA, Italy.

Florentina Richeldi, BSc in Tourism Management and Marketing, is trainer in Remote Viewing and ESP development, Italian representative for Russell Targ (Stargate Project, Stanford Research Institute, USA). Florentina Richeldi is master of Reiki and Self-awareness Growing Process. Certified Awake Operator ®.

Alice Trabucco has MD Degree in Medicine and Surgery, University of Pisa Italy Postgraduate student in Systemic Psychotherapy and Dialectical Analysis.