

Carlos S. Alvarado, PhD

Researching Out-of-Body Experiences

Abstract

In recent times research on out-of-body experiences has focused on psychological and neurophysiological aspects of the experience. While much more needs to be done to extend this research, there are other topics that have been neglected. One of them is the veridical aspects of OBEs. This includes two kinds of spontaneous experiences. First, those OBEs in which the experiencer presumably obtains information about things not known before (such as conversations or events happening at a distance). Second, those OBEs in which the experiencer is seen or perceived in some way at a distance while the OBE is taking place. A number of previous researchers have discussed these events, among them Hornell Hart. But the topic has also been explored in the laboratory. Future work might start with the collection of new cases and the replication of experiments, such as those conducted by Charles T. Tart. In addition to documenting new cases, we may explore the content of the experience, focusing in general on the features of the experiences, including such aspects as the form the experience takes, that is, the ways information is perceived (e.g., travelling to distant places and seeing things) and the ways apparitions are perceived (e.g., a figure resembling the experiencer). In terms of experiments it would be fruitful to study those few individuals who claim to be able to control experiences in the laboratory. The idea of using hypnotic suggestion to induce experiences, a notion that has been with us from the old days, needs to be systematically explored, particularly with highly susceptible individuals.

History of Parapsychology

Abstract

This course will present selected aspects of the history of parapsychology. It has been developed to provide students of the Atlantic University Masters in Parapsychology Program with information about the beginnings and development of the field, as well as with a general historical perspective about methodology, findings and theory. Parapsychology was an attempt at empirical studies of such phenomena as thought-transference, dreams about the future, apparitions, hauntings, poltergeists, mediumship and other topics. All this work was conducted in the context of concepts from psychology, psychiatry and spiritualism, such as the subconscious mind and survival of death. An important part of this work was that done by members of the London based Society for Psychical Research founded in 1882, as well as that done in continental Europe and the United States by other individuals and groups. Some of those who

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participated in this movement included Camille Flammarion, Gustave Geley, Edmund Gurney, James H. Hyslop, William James, Oliver J. Lodge, Cesare Lombroso, Frederic W.H. Myers, Carl du Prel, Charles Richet, and Albert F. von Schrenck-Notzing. Discussions include work conducted with such mediums as Leonora E. Piper and Eusapia Palladino, and later developments such as the experimental studies of J.B. Rhine and associates at Duke University with an emphasis on the 1930s and 1940s. The course presents the perspective that parapsychology unfolded not only through the research work of particular individuals, but through the interaction of the work with other such aspects as the performances of mediums and the growth of institutions of the field.



Carlos S. Alvarado has a PhD in psychology from the University of Edinburgh. His work has centered on survey research (on out-of-body experiences and other psychic experiences) and bibliographical studies about the history of psychical research.

Alvarado is currently Scholar in Residence and Faculty at Atlantic University. He is on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Near-Death Studies* and the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, and is an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. Alvarado is the recipient of the 2010 Parapsychological Association's Outstanding Career Award.

He is one of the editors of *Research in Parapsychology 1993* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998) and the author of booklets for introducing parapsychology to the general public (*Getting Started in Parapsychology*. New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 2002; *Apuntes para una Introducción a la Parapsicología*. New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1999). His scientific and scholarly work has been published in psychology, psychiatry, and parapsychology journals.

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