

Review of: "What is it like to be Out-of-Body? Phenomenal accounts of experiencers"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you for the invitation to review the paper "What is it like to be Out-of-Body? Phenomenal accounts of experiencers", published in Qeios.

The authors tackle a difficult question in a field that appears to capture the public's imagination. Further, riddles of consciousness have plagued—and still do—philosophers, neuroscientists and the like for millennia, with no prospect of resolution in sight. Accordingly, describing states of consciousness is a fundamental scientific endeavour and should be pursued with the same rigour and attention as other aspects of psychology.

The paper in its present form partially meets standards of rigour, but would also profit from some improvement. I will outline my suggestions in the order in which they appear in the manuscript.

Title: This is somewhat awkward, why hyphenate "Out-of-Body". Don't you mean "phenomenological" as opposed to "phenomenal"? And the term "experiencer" seems linguistically odd, or redundant. How about: "Descriptions of out-of-body states of consciousness: A qualitative synthesis of 13 published case studies". Or something like that. Do you really have a phenomenological study? I think you have a qualitative interview research synthesis design.

I thought that the introduction was under-developed. Much of the literature in the discussion belongs in the introduction. I missed a clear argument for why exactly this study was necessary – if the reports were already published, what is your purpose in synthesising these? (There are no doubt good reasons, but they are not sufficiently explicated.)

Also, I felt like the interesting television analogy could be developed further and different theories or accounts for what OBEs are believed to represent should be delineated.

Turning to the method, it is not clear where or how you searched for the 13 case studies. What were your search criteria and what criteria did you use to include and exclude studies? Without this information, it is difficult to know how representative and appropriate your sample was or to what extent there was bias in your methods.

Additionally, the definitions for the criteria used to code the studies is far too brief. What counts as "spontaneous and self-induced"? Is this comparable to hypnosis and what methods of hypnosis are available and are these comparable to one another? How exactly were the studies coded, how comprehensive were the original reports? Without this information, the reader cannot judge whether you have selected reports to make OBEs seem like a consistent phenomenon or whether there is great variation here.

I find the results difficult to follow, can you not integrate this better into text, instead of piling short statements together? In a similar vein, the beginning of the discussion is a mere repetition of the results, there is not much consideration of limitations, how this study relates to previous literature and what future work should be conducted. Additionally, as I mentioned above, I think that the literature here belongs in the introduction.

I hope that the authors find my comments useful and I wish them well with their work.