

THE PROCESS OF SEPARATION AND RETURN IN EXPERIENCES FULLY 'OUT OF THE BODY'

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THE easiest kind of 'out of the body' experience to discuss is that in which the physical body and its sense organs appear to be asleep or entranced while the subject himself is singly-conscious in another space and body, or multiply-conscious in spaces other than the physical. I shall describe it as *full separation*. In some cases the space revealed may appear to resemble physical space in character and content. But even then the sense-organs by which the phenomena are observed are not located in the physical body, nor are they visible to other people normally conscious in the physical world. So in all cases one is justified in regarding the conscious self as functioning, at those times, in a non-physical space.

This kind of experience is comparatively easy to discuss, because dream, in spite of its unreality and the fantastic nature of its content, provides an obvious analogy. Everyone who has had a dream knows, at least vaguely, what it is to be 'in another world' and to have non-physical senses. There are other kinds of 'out of the body' experience, distantly analogous to thought and intuition, in which the physical body appears to be awake, so that there is a degree of doubly-conscious awareness of both physical and psychical (or mystical) spaces at once or in quick alternation. These will also be called *separation*, if the primary consciousness is unmistakably in a non-physical body. But our field of inquiry must be drastically limited if we are to avoid losing ourselves in a maze of unresolved difficulties, aside from our main line of attack. Those other kinds of 'out of the body' experience, accordingly, cannot come in for more than passing reference.

The method of investigation adopted here will be by brief commentary on first-hand descriptions of experience, some recorded by other people and accessible in print, but most taken from my own records and not yet published. In selecting descriptions two further limitations have been imposed :

(1) Experiences involving detailed knowledge, by the subject, of his separated human form have been altogether ignored (but precise observations of a more general kind have been occasionally admitted) ;

(2) Experiences involving knowledge of the existence and character of other people in the separated, non-physical state have been excluded, except for a very few cases the ignoring of which would seriously impoverish the inquiry into the process of separation and return.

As far as my own records are concerned, the experiences classified as *full separation* number about 550. The first consideration above reduces the number quotable to about 250. The second reduces the number further to perhaps 150. These limitations also result in all the most mystical experiences being ignored or receiving only passing mention, while the mystical aspects of the experiences quoted are for the most part rudimentary. This means that the experiences judged to possess the greatest *a priori* value and the most permanent reality have nearly all had to be passed over.

As regards content, therefore, the descriptions chosen form a very unrepresentative sample. But I do not think that a distorted view is presented of the process of separation and return or of the general conditions 'out of the body', as these appear in my experience, whether the separation is psychical or mystical in character—provided it is of the kind described as *full*. And I do not think that there is any cause to regard the experiences that have been selected as lacking reality compared with physical ones. The impression, at the time and after, was quite the reverse.

I. SOME DEFINITIONS

It will be best to begin by distinguishing dream from separation. We may lay down, first, two general characteristics of all 'out of the body' experience, including dream :

(A) The objects of perception, understanding and feeling are organized in such a way as to constitute phenomena of a 'world' that is not physical ;

(B) The human (or other) form in which these faculties seem to be placed is also situated in that 'world'.

Dream can then be distinguished by possessing the following further characteristic :

(D) The phenomena, when studied from the viewpoint of the mature personality in the physical world, seem to proceed irrationally, no adequate reflective power or control having been active at the time.

In contrast, the following two characteristics, in addition to (A) and (B), may be put forward as distinguishing *separation* :

(R) We are able, at the time, to recall physical conditions or the physical form or personality, and to make rational comparisons between the inner and outer modes of life ;

(S) When, in that other form of consciousness, we attend to the phenomena of that other 'world', we realize that they are neither irrational (as in dream) nor coldly material (as in the physical world), but that, on the contrary, they can be objectively and rationally, yet sympathetically, surveyed by a higher judgment in accord with their essential nature. And this conclusion is not upset on returning to the physical body.

Briefly, characteristics A and B mean that the experience is some kind of *life in another world*, and R and S mean that the power of *rational reflection* remains with the subject.

A dream will be termed *lucid* if, in addition to possessing characteristics A, B and D, there is a glimmering of characteristic R, insufficient, however, to justify our saying that characteristic D has been overcome. We are able to say, while dreaming, 'This is a dream', or even, 'This is a separation', but are unable to exercise any rational control or make any further rational reflection.

If the characteristic R (recognition of the state) is well developed but not the characteristic S (self-command) we have what I shall call *fantasy-separation*. This is an experience in which there is a considerable degree of rational reflection and precise observation on the part of the obviously separated observer. But the phenomena are somewhat disagreeable, or apparently irrational, and atoned for only by their intellectual interest and the remarkable bodily freedom typical of separations. We have hardly any power to improve conditions or become liberated to higher ones. In brief, there is rational reflection, but no rational control over unharmonized influences.

My records include over 300 experiences classified as *fantasy-separation*, 250 of them in the years 1927-39 inclusive. An element of *fantasy* is, however, liable to break into any separation that is not of a mystical category, and may be very difficult to overcome. The sense in which I use the term *fantasy* will become clear, I hope, from the illustrations to be given in due course.

It is convenient next to distinguish what I shall call *half-separation*. This is a separation possessing the following further characteristic :

(H) We appear at first to be still in the physical body, and

the phenomena—seen, heard, touched—are so convincingly like the physical surroundings that without experience, mental restraint, or very obvious physical impossibilities, we mistake the condition for physical wakefulness. Upon reflection, either at the time or afterwards, it becomes evident that certain non-physical phenomena have been imposed on, caused to break through, or blended with what would have been the physical surroundings in normal physical awareness, if the condition had been physical. And it also becomes evident that our form of consciousness has a certain freedom of movement in liberation from the physical body, or that it differs in form from the physical body in certain respects.

Two typical examples of *half-separation* are included in the collection by Muldoon and Carrington.¹ In the 'Schmid Case', the subject was seen to be physically unconscious at the time when she saw herself sit erect in bed and raise her right hand and arm. In the other case, a Mr G. J. Einarsson was aware of sitting up in bed at the same time as he could feel his physical arms lying across his chest in a recumbent position. Several classic cases of apparitions are of this type. A good example is the 'Dodson Case', in which the subject's mother (dead 16 years) appeared, placed two children in her arms and put the bedclothes over them. This case is fully veridical.²

There are seven clear instances of *half-separation* in my records, and also several other cases where *full separation* lapsed into *half-separation*, and then, from that state, either lapsed into the physical one or was followed by another *full separation* (see below).

Full separation can now be distinguished by the following characteristic, in addition to characteristics A, B, R and S, which distinguish separation in general :

(F. 1). No consciousness is located in the physical body. More precisely, if we have spatial or visual awareness of the physical body, or of a body which resembles or is believed to be the physical body, we also perceive unmistakably that the form in which our consciousness is altogether located is distinct and fully apart from that body.

The symbols F. 2 and F. 3 could be taken as referring to two other kinds of separation, which I shall describe as *free separation* and *mystical form liberation*. These are ways in which the mind can

¹ *The Phenomena of Astral Projection*, London, 1951, pp. 58, 122. This book will be referred to as M. and C.

² *Proc. S.P.R.*, 10, 380-2.

'come into its own' without incapacitating the physical body, and, to some extent, voluntarily.

Lastly, there are states that might be called *incipient separation*, in which parts of the inner form of consciousness (the legs, for example) appear to be liberated, but other parts are as if still held in place by restraining forces. Or a liberated condition or liberating process may be detected in parts of the body, without any obvious spatial separation. If the whole body appears liberated, but not separated, I shall speak of the state as a *dissociated* one. The inner and outer spaces then appear to be in a state of balance, susceptible to a certain amount of intelligent control one way or the other.

II. THE STATE OF THE PHYSICAL BODY IN FULL SEPARATION

If separation proceeds as the result of a balanced and rational development of character (and not from shock, physical weakness, drugs, or other physical influence), it has, in my experience, no different effect on the physical body from that of a deep and refreshing sleep. For it is merely a deep sleep in which we have keenly reflective inner consciousness because of the mind becoming exceptionally loosened from fixation.

The fixation which inhibits reflective consciousness in separation is of several kinds. *Bodily* fixation expresses itself in muscular tensions or an impression of strain (possibly very slight) in some part or parts of the body, or in awkwardness of movement or posture. *Mental* fixation may be :

(1) intellectual—fixed ideas, cant opinions, hasty assumptions, wishful thinking, and in general any presuppositions that are false and obstructive to complete openness of mind ;

(2) emotional—inability to detach oneself from emotional disturbances of all kinds, however slight, and from desires and ambitions however noble or useful they seem ;

(3) sensory—the tendency to grasp at, identify oneself with, or become absorbed in, physical phenomena, and to 'take them for granted', instead of observing them detachedly, 'out of time', by mystical *recollection*.

All kinds of fixation are of course interrelated in a most complicated way. Their hampering, darkening and lowering effect becomes most noticeable in separation or fantasy-separation.

Roughly speaking, it appears to me that sleep of the body is produced by a supernaturally complete removal of bodily fixation,

necessitating also a quiescence of the other kinds of fixation. If, for some reason, there is a resurgence of mental fixation during sleep, we either awaken, or, if we have certain unconscious habits towards recollection, become inwardly conscious in dream. Reflective awareness in separation, however, rests on *conscious* habits of recollection, so that the ease and tranquillity of the physical breathing and heart-motion are entirely unaffected by the independent will and possibly intense feeling of the life within.

The physical body, therefore, reposes exactly as in deep sleep, all the muscles being relaxed and the breathing and heart-motion so smooth as not to disturb the balance of the mind. In separation to the higher levels, indeed, the breathing seems to stop, and the repose of the physical body is so complete that, to an onlooker, the soul might be supposed to have peacefully passed away.

I deduce that this is so, partly because that is how the physical body appears to me at the time, and partly because on one occasion, when the separation was of a *mystical grade*, my wife became alarmed at the death-like stillness of my physical body, and by touching it caused me to return.

In no separation granted to me has there been the slightest compulsion, violence, or rigidity, but exactly the reverse. I believe one may go even further than this, and say that, however much we may be mentally strained, depressed, or caught up in conflict at any time, if for a few moments we are taken freely, by separation, above the levels of fantasy-influence, we return with all strain vanished, and with a new zestful outlook on our physical life.

I consider it an infallible test of the healthful and true character of separation, that we should return healed and spiritually invigorated for the leading of a better life in this world.

III. PSYCHICAL AND MYSTICAL GRADES : THE STATE OF THE MIND IN SEPARATION

The grade of the separation, from the fantasy-levels to the mystical ones, clearly depends on the degree of conquest over emotional and intellectual fixation. Fantasy-separations (and, to a much less extent, dream) have a remarkable teaching value, in revealing the nature of the obstructive forces, or rather, the hidden fixations and false beliefs which keep us down to a low level. Then a spontaneous working-out follows in waking life, so that a truer and more healthful disposition can become properly grounded in us.

Full separation being the liberation of the mind from the body,

it is thus, far more than dream, a direct manifestation of the state of one's inner mind or individuality, as distinct from outward personal appearances (which may be quite different). Consequently, nothing of value could be experienced in separation, except what is the fruit and *a priori* manifestation of character tendencies made habitual in physical life.

There appears to be good agreement among mystics as to the course of progress of those whose way of life and innate mental disposition induce the single-minded devotion to recollection and other mystical practices, rather than to some practical achievement or administrative work in this world. Without entering into details, it may be said that according to the mystics a complete re-orientation of life occurs when the Purgative Way passes into the Illuminative Way, and revelatory experiences that are *mystical*, rather than *psychical* or *psychological*, are for the first time granted.

The distinction between *psychical* and *mystical* grades of experience is very difficult to explain, though easy to recognize when experienced. The following remarks do not pretend to be more than brief suggestions based on how things appear to me.

In mystical experiences one becomes conscious of a *unitive* quality with two complementary aspects. There is an immanent unity, which is the integration of the self, existing harmoniously on a ground which is truly ourselves, redeemed through conflict and fortitude, liberated and universalized by Recollection. For many years, however (until the Unitive Life begins), that *ground* remains generally very obscure in detail, though unmistakable, when known by Recollection, in its general character of supernatural self-fulfilment. And there is a Transcendent Unity, which is known through a metaphysical direction of the mind to the One and the Good, established in the continuous love of the good, the true and the beautiful which arises in our conscience.

Even in the physical world a vivid impression of soul-integration and fulfilment, it is often recognized, comes in a deep experience of beauty or of steady heartfelt love for another human being. But I do not believe there can be continuous repose in that soul-integration and fulfilment except from an habitual looking to, or motivation from, the Transcendent Unity. And that requires, for its proper development, a special revelation and a special labour, to which everyone (I believe) must come in his own due time.

An experience in separation will be termed of *mystical grade* if one is steadily conscious of the presence of the Transcendent Unity, born from or begetting some specific consciousness of the immanent unity, that is, of our universalized inner nature, as contrasted with our outward physical personality.

'Steadily conscious' means 'without any effort of concentration or determination of will being necessary to show that the unity is still present with us.' Such an effect is usually described as *passive*; but that term should not be taken as implying the absence of an intelligent and voluntary inner life—the outer life is passive, not the inner. It implies that the power of 'loving obedience' to the Transcendent Unity has become properly our own, so that it is as if written on the soul, just as, for instance, the power of concentrated thought becomes written on us, with practice. Instead of the term *passive* I shall use the term *continuous*.

An experience in separation will be described as of *psychical grade* if, in spite of possibly continuous recollective awareness, and perhaps also a remembrance of the Transcendent Unity, that unity is not spontaneously and continuously established in us. The perceptions may then be described as *significant*, but not *intelligible*. And the personal consciousness may be described as (in some cases) integrated, but not fulfilled.

In the terminology of St Teresa, 'Passive Recollection and Quiet' seems to mark the highest point reached by psychical states, and the 'Prayer of Union' the beginning of mystical states (as defined here). States subsisting in 'Passive Recollection' are called *supernatural*, and their distinguishing characteristic is said to be *infused grace*.

Further important characteristics of mystical states (deriving from the Unities mentioned) are distinct impressions or perceptions as of *worlds within worlds*, and *universal perfection*. Plotinus gives a strikingly beautiful and suggestive account of these:

In this intelligible world . . . all the essences see each other and interpenetrate each other in the most intimate depth of their nature. . . . Every being contains within itself the entire intelligible world, and also beholds it entire in any particular being. All things are located everywhere. Everything there is all, and all is each thing; infinite splendour radiates around. . . . Rest is perfect, because it is not mingled with any principle of disturbance. The beautiful is completely beautiful there, because it does not dwell in that which is not beautiful. Each one of the celestial things, instead of resting on an alien foundation, has its own especial seat, its origin, and its principle, in its own being, and does not differ from the region within which it dwells, because it is Intelligence that is its substrate, and itself is intelligible.¹

In psychical states of separation, similar characteristics of universality and spatial interpenetration often make themselves felt, and will receive frequent mention in the illustrations to be

¹ Ennead v.8.4. Trans. K. S. Guthrie, London, 1918.

given. But there is no possibility of mistaking a fully mystical state for a psychical one, on the score of either intelligibility or reality. Psychical states of separation may indeed seem far more real than physical states, as if one had for the first time become really awake. But neither physical nor psychical states bear any comparison, as regards intelligible reality and *a priori* value, with mystical states. To know mystical states is to know that the others are *a posteriori*.

IV. DESCRIPTIONS SPECIALLY RELATING TO THE PROCESS OF SEPARATION

(A) *Initiated by Shock, Physical Weakness, Drugs, or other Physical Influence*

Among descriptions already published (of other people's experience), this is by far the commonest method of initiation. Approximately a third of the M. and C. cases, for instance (46 out of 140?), fall into this category. The following is the only reasonably clear case, presumably in this category, in my own experience:

[2] (probably 1919, at the age of 12). In the course of an experiment with yellow phosphorus in a small laboratory at the top of the house, a piece caught alight and stuck to one of my fingers for a moment. I felt no pain, but walked downstairs in order to have the burn dressed. In the kitchen my mother hastened to get a piece of cloth, while I stood watching her at the other end of the room.

Presently I noticed the light in the room taking on a glowing, dream-like quality, and almost immediately the ears appeared to go deaf. The objects in the room then appeared to become more distant, without, however, shifting their positions. Next, the sense of sight was removed, so that I stood with only the senses of touch, bodily feeling and spatial position. After another few seconds the feeling in the feet disappeared. It was not that the feet went numb, but simply that I appeared to have no feet. Space was either empty or annihilated there. The emptiness rose gradually higher in the legs, until I appeared likewise to have no lower part of the body.

Then came a sudden change. All feeling in the body disappeared, but at almost the same instant I realized that I was still standing, aware, in a curiously interested but detached way, of the sound of some heavy object falling down about eight feet away, behind and slightly to the right. Before having time to reflect, I became conscious in the usual way, to find myself lying on the floor, having fallen down in a faint. I arose at once, feeling perfectly normal, and very ashamed at having apparently fainted when nothing whatever was wrong.

The strangeness of hearing the sound of the fall from outside, without feeling anything, was very puzzling, but having no knowledge of the

possibility of separation from the body I did not consciously think of the experience in those terms.

A similar description of gradual process is given in the 'Annenkoff Case':¹

... I felt myself become more and more weak, physically and morally. My first impression was that my legs and arms had no more weight, then my stomach, then my breast. Soon I found myself beside my body. . . .

In nearly all cases of this class, however, the subject becomes suddenly aware of being out of the body, without knowing how it happened.

(B) *Emergence of the separated consciousness from a dream-state through the revival of Recollection in the course of the dream*

This is the commonest method of initiation with me. The experience following, numbered [3] is described very fully considering the smallness of its content, for the reason that it was the first separation in my experience definitely exceeding the physical state in impression of reality. The other description, [117], is also given at length, in order to provide a clear example of stable, objective conditions during the longer separations, and also to show, by contrast, the advance made possible through the discovery of the Transcendent Unity towards the end of 1929, and a seven-month period of intensive rebirth following.

[3] (1927). This was an awakening to a level very close to that of the physical world, so that the change was as little abrupt as it well could be. The immediate cause lay in the power of Recollection becoming active, from habit and associations, during dream (I had practised Recollection for about two years before this date). But I think that what occasioned this specific experience was the fact that the previous evening I had been able to maintain a continuous recollected state during a concert by a celebrated string quartet, with such effect that at one time I appeared to be rapt out of space by the extreme beauty of the music, and held for a few moments in a new state a steady contemplation and joy.

After this I remember going to bed with mind peacefully composed and full of a quiet joy. The dream, during the night that followed, was at the beginning quite irrational, though perhaps more keenly followed than usual. I seemed to move smoothly through a region of space where, presently, a vivid sense of cold flowed in on me and held my attention with a strange interest. I believe that at that moment the dream had become lucid. Then suddenly, the dormant faculty of Recollection having become stirred, all that up to now had been

¹ M. and C., p. 199. The passage is translated from the French.

wrapped in confusion instantly passed away. and a new space burst forth in vivid presence and utter reality, with perception free and pinpointed as never before ; the darkness itself seemed alive. The thought that was then borne in upon me with inescapable conviction was this : 'I have never been awake before.'

At that time, in spite of two previous incipient awakenings, I had no knowledge of the possibility of separation, not to mention the manner of its occurrence ; and this ignorance was no doubt responsible for my inability to remain in that state longer and recognize more. I believed that I had in some way seen the bedroom from another space in which one could be really alive, but was scarcely ready to recognize the duplication of the bodily faculties (in spite of the fact that my consciousness seemed to be strangely orientated in the room, being as if upright and nearer the centre). These relations of space and form, being metaphysical, are extraordinarily elusive, and confuse one's understanding greatly at first. Consequently, after a few moments, I returned to the physical state, with nothing more to record than what has been said, but with an abiding impression for future inspiration and guidance.

[117] (October 1932). In dream I heard a voice of unpleasant quality asserting of a certain place that it was 'where Tiberius planned one of his murders'. Immediately there was a fairly clear view of an ornamental tower or gateway resembling the 'Gate of Honour' at Caius College, Cambridge. On reflecting that the voice was malicious and untruthful, I became aware of being in a separated state (the habit of detachment from fixed ideas established recollection). Everything that now proceeded was rationally observed. The light was at first like that of a dark night in the physical world, but intellectually dark, because corresponding with mental or spiritual limitations. The appearance was as if I was carried slightly left, in a smooth motion, along the raised bank of a river, which lay at my right hand. The water was not seen, the river and its position being indicated by intellectual idea only.

On the bank, a little to the left and in front, as the ground rose slightly, there then appeared three men garbed as labourers, looking across the river. A persuasion to think less of them on account of their appearance was defeated ; and with that, another and smaller human form, in which I also seemed to be (one space within another), in an inverted position with the head downwards, reversed itself and became upright. Forthwith I was directed to turn to the right, still as if on the bank and to look across the river.

Now, as I faced due forward, what had been represented as the river appeared as a rather low-lying level expanse, significative of water because it divided one kind of manifestation from another. Beyond, perhaps 200 yards away, a wonderful sight met my eyes. A palace or temple of superb beauty and vast proportions, but entirely unostentatious, flashed out, completely vivid in a light that shone glowingly against a background of holy darkness as of the night sky, a darkness not deadening to the perceptions, but showing the power of goodness through it.

In front, rather below the level of the place where I appeared to stand, was seen a broadly arched entrance, about 50 yards wide, and a long flight of hundreds of steps mounting within. At the top, deep within the building, there came a glow of light from a huge stained glass window, curved above like the arch of the entrance, and having designed upon it the forms of majestic human figures like those painted by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The small forms of living people seemed to proceed up and down the steps.

Having observed this scene in admiration for perhaps half a minute, I turned slightly to contemplate the rest of the building. As I did this, I was gently raised a little and carried by a smooth motion, perfectly controlled from within by obedience, further along the bank towards the left, thus being enabled to survey the palace from various angles. It appeared to be on a vast site, and stretched away to the left without any break or separation in the building. While the contour was beautifully varied, it formed nevertheless one single building, extending to the left for at least the four or five hundred yards that I could see.

But presently intellectual wondering took me within the seeing, to ask of interior causes. And for a few moments, in a more purely intellectual state, it was imparted to me (or so I understood it) that this entire manifestation sprang from a perfect kind of memory—not in any way my own memory, but the joint memory of many human beings, worked out and fulfilled over a very great period of time, so as to be part of the basis of their joint life. During this new contemplation I seemed to be in a brighter light, no longer night, but day.

But these impressions were too abstract to be maintained; and by a gentle process I was brought back to the physical world, refreshed in spirit and body.

That the moral side of life cannot be divorced from the intellectual side is shown, in such experiences as this, by the fact that the raising and liberating of our state is brought about by the successive rejecting of fixed ideas, uncontrolled reaction to persuasive influences, inclinations to superiority, judging from appearances, respect for persons—in short, of fixation of every kind. And every fixation is at once anti-intellectual (in blinding our perceptions) and anti-moral (in acting contrary to the Good).

It is also evident, from such an experience as this, that everything in a separated state, including positions and movements in space, is representative of deeper mental conditions having an objective basis but perceived according to subjective capabilities or tendencies. The palace itself, for instance, was objective, on the right, and in glowing light; but I could see it only from a darker state, to the left, and as at night-time.

(C) *Initiation from a state of 'Opening'*

The mode of vision in which bright interior scenes are

observed through a more or less circular opening made in the physical field of view is common with many people. Crystal Gazing is vision of this kind induced in certain familiar ways; it most often runs into fantasy merely, but is sometimes veridical.¹ Visions described as *hypnagogic* in the literature of psychical research² may also be classified as Openings. But they seldom show a clear boundary, and generally lack three-dimensional reality in an obvious way, so that they take on the character of imaginations. The Openings considered here were vividly three-dimensional, and free from fantasy.

While Openings in general may be regarded as common, the transition from a state of Opening to a state of Separation, illustrated here, is comparatively very rare with me, but also particularly instructive, I think.

[1923] (29 April 1950). While in bed and apparently awake, I perceived a visual opening with circular boundary, within which there was presented a scene in bright sunlight and vivid colours. It appeared to be a park, with many people walking peacefully about. At the same time I was aware of the physical body lying on its back in bed, but not altogether as if I were in that body. It was as if I were apart and watching the physical body watching. Again appearing to think in the physical body, I conceived a wish to transfer consciousness to a free personal form. Immediately I rose and walked forward towards the opening. The opening appeared to enlarge itself gradually, but before entering wholly within it I had to pass over a patch of sandy-coloured ground, as if bared for excavation. It seemed to represent a gulf between two spheres of existence. Passing through, however, I reach the park and mix with the people. There is difficulty in distinguishing details, as if the eyes are out of focus and cannot be brought under steady control; but a general brightness of the light around is very noticeable. My form is small, seeming from its size and manner of walking to be that of an infant aged about two years or less. There is a rather general though very definite sight and feeling of clothes below, such as a child of that age might wear. Looking up at the sky, I see a perfectly clear and beautiful pattern of clouds, of the cirrus type.

[476] (April 1935). I was in a state of relaxed watchfulness while lying in bed, when the visual field opened out so that a scene was presented in bright light, inside a circular boundary. In the centre was a large rock of some substance like granite on a sandy beach, near the water's edge. The thought occurred to me that I might get through the opening on to the beach, and almost at once I left the body and

¹ See, for example, the experiences of Miss A. discussed by F. W. H. Myers in *Proc. S.P.R.*, 8, 1892, 498 ff.

² *An Introductory Study of Hypnagogic Phenomena*, by F. E. Leaning, *Proc. S.P.R.*, 35, 1925, 289 ff. See particularly pp. 331-6.

approached the rock. There was no particular sensation of passing through the opening, but I merely came quite near to the rock, till I could see its surface glistening with points of light, making an impression of greater vividness than in the physical world. No sooner had I arrived near the rock, however, than I became conscious of difficulty in breathing, which distracted me and brought me back in a few moments to the physical body.

In the next experience to be described the Opening was of the kind I call *spatial*, and the separation took place instantaneously, so that it almost comes under the category of 'free separations' (effected by relaxation and mental detachment alone) :

[1493] (4 June 1945). This separation began with a 'spatial opening' in which the surface of a whitewashed wall, two feet or so away, was studied, with a full clarity of perception and the usual impressions of precise spatial position and of seeing 'through the eyelids' of the physical eyes, which remained consciously shut. The opening then changed to one in which heath-like country was seen in a wide panorama, with steep ground in front ; and almost at once I was conscious for a few moments of being separated and amidst that scene.

Spatial Openings, as described here, are rather common with me, about 160 having been recorded. Sometimes the whole bedroom is seen in this way, 'through the eyelids'. But usually something quite different is seen, in one case a bright sky with clouds, seen as if through a circular hole cut in the ceiling. The epithet *spatial* means that the spatial effect is exactly as if some physical object or scene were being observed from the physical body, but the light is not physical. The physical eyes are nearly always shut, and consciously so.

The concluding example under this head is an elaborate one in which the opening occurred not at the beginning, but in the middle, after a partial return :

[1861] (4 November 1949). This was a long separation, in five distinct stages, the last highly mystical. It began with a lucid dream or fantasy-separation, and when the improprieties were overcome I found myself in a strange wood-panelled room at the top of a building, through which I descended, finding a young woman 'secretary' in a ground-floor room, conditions being extremely like physical ones. At that point I opened the eyes of a 'duplicate' form, and saw the light of the physical world (as it fully appeared) coming into the bedroom through a window with burglar-guards. Being unwilling to remain in that state or to awaken in the physical world, I closed the duplicate eyes, and then saw (with more interior eyes) an opening into a state with the brighter and more beautiful light of a garden. The opening was small at first, but by the voluntary calling forth of courage, faith or

obedience, it enlarged itself, and I passed through into the garden . . . (the other two stages are omitted).

(D) *Similar or Related Experience-types (Cases already published)*

The following dream-initiated projection of Muldoon¹ seems to be a fantasy-construction built upon the process just described :

I was dreaming that I had entered a massive hall . . . it was now a small room and there was but one small hole in the centre of the ceiling through which I could see light. . . . It seemed that I stood there for some time when suddenly I wondered if I could not fly through it. I began to rise in the air but as I was passing through the hole I became caught fast in it. . . . At this point I began to awaken and realize what was taking place . . . the position of the astral body corresponded with the position it held in the dream. I was just half-way through the ceiling of the room when I became conscious.

It would be quite possible, I think, for the sensation of being 'stuck' in the ceiling to be what I call a fantasy-construct (determined largely by subjective prepossessions), and still to be quite as vivid and realistic as in the physical world.

An unnamed correspondent of the *Occult Review*² claims a power of more or less voluntarily seeing people in distant parts by the following process :

I close my eyes and concentrate on the person. I seem to project my consciousness forward and in a few minutes I see the friend. It is as if I was looking through the reverse end of a telescope, something similar to Miss Okeden's 'tunnel'. At other times I seem to be actually in the room with the friend . . . (some veridical experiences are then mentioned).

These experiences might be classified as free separations, like [1493] above. 'Miss Okeden' was a previous correspondent, who wrote as follows :

I close my eyes and have a feeling of going over backwards . . . and I find myself going down a long, dim tunnel. . . . At the far end is a tiny speck of light which grows as I approach into a large square. . . . In nearly every case I can describe the room my friends are in . . .³

The tunnel would, in my view, be a fantasy-construct, but the scene and final projection (veridical in this case also) merit being called *real*. In one of my own experiences I seemed to pass through a tunnel, in a dream-like state, and emerged through the opening at the end into a scene in bright sunlight.

¹ Quoted by R. Shirley in *The Mystery of the Human Double*, London, undated, p. 94.

² *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

³ *ibid.*, p. 29.

Sometimes the opening through which the conscious 'I' passes in order to achieve full separation is not a visual one, but is apparently located elsewhere in the body. A writer quoted by Shirley states that in his experiences he had 'the extraordinary sensation of being drawn out horizontally through a small hole in the centre of the skull'.¹ Similarly, in another M. and C. case, the subject states that she had on several occasions 'been conscious of leaving her body from the top of the head.'²

(E) *Other Illustrations of Separation Initiated from a Balanced State of Dissociation*

The instances grouped under this head, all of which are in some sense voluntary, may be roughly grouped under four sub-heads :

(a) not unexpected, and probably assisted by some kind of voluntary detachment ; but the process itself spontaneous ;

(b) the wish to separate is easily and quickly fulfilled, as in getting out of bed in the physical world ;

(c) some calling-forth of a *decision from self*, or *exertion of self-will*, effects separation. The resulting state is then of poor quality, and sometimes very distressing ;

(d) some calling-forth of *Obedience* (poised denial of self-will) effects separation. The resulting state is then of better quality, and more refreshing than the physical state.

I first give an instance coming clearly under the first sub-head :

[750] (December 1936). While awake in the body, lying on my back in bed, I found myself consciously dissociated and looking at a point on the ceiling (i.e. a 'duplicate' ceiling). The wish to 'pin-point' the attention so that the details might be steadily observed, without strain or fixation, led to an effect like the focusing of the eyes. After a few seconds there was a change, and I became fully conscious of floating in a separated form apparently a little above the physical body.

The next instance is of *successive* separations, the first of which probably comes under sub-head (a) and was strikingly real, while the second probably comes under sub-head (c), requiring some effort from self, and was accordingly subject to fantasy :

[1202] (23 November 1941). Aware of the balance of spaces in a quasi-physical state, I emerged in an inner form from the side of the bed, and almost at once appeared as if floating high up in the air, while looking down on a dark scene. A squarely-built house was almost due below, with bright lights shining from the windows. The sense of spatial reality, as in the physical world, was intense and vivid, but so

¹ *ibid.*, p. 138.

² p. 212.

unusual that a return was caused to the quasi-physical state, so that the body appeared again in bed, and I was again conscious of the balance of spaces. A second separation then occurred, also from the side, and while this took place I was objectively conscious of the physical body lying face downwards. But consciousness resided almost wholly in the separating form. The state now began to merge into fantasy. The separated form appeared to be on the floor, trying to rise from a position half under the bed, which, however, next appeared like a settee with hanging drapery. The separation forthwith became entirely dreamlike in character, uncontrollable, though the mind still reflected and tried to perceive clearly and understand.

The distinction between sub-heads (*b*) and (*c*) is very indefinite and artificially drawn. I regard the following experience as probably coming best under sub-head (*b*) :

[463] (April 1935). Becoming aware of the disjunction of spaces which sometimes initiates separation, and being to all appearances in bed, I rose in the separated form, leaving the physical body still sleeping. The room in which the separated form was placed bore only a general resemblance to the physical bedroom, though there was a persuasion to think it the same. A mirror was at hand, but knowing from previous experience that curiosity to look at one's appearance sometimes leads to effects of fantasy, I refrained from looking, and proceeded to the door. This, however, had no handle; and again disinclined to make actions from self-will, I turned to the windows and opened them, partly to look out or escape, and partly because the air in the room seemed stuffy, so that breathing was difficult. On trying to take deep breaths, a strange feeling, almost like a smell, was very realistically felt in the lungs. Passing somehow through the window, I floated to the ground in the silence of the night, everything being quite dark. Throughout this experience there was a lack of higher reflection and obedience. And instead of continuing, it quickly lapsed, and I returned to the physical body in an entirely normal way.

Not more than three or four of my experiences have been definitely initiated by effort from self—sub-head (*c*). The distaste for the resulting state and a peculiar form of anguish afterwards, together with shame at having succumbed to a harmful temptation, in those few experiences, have been quite sufficient to inhibit future efforts that way entirely, unless very slight. The following is a curious example in which I was induced to make too strong an effort :

[1891] (14 January 1950). Becoming aware of the freedom to separate, I made a voluntary decision to move from the bed, in a separated form, out into the room. When out, however, the state of consciousness changed suddenly so that from the new point of view it appeared that I was still in the position of the physical body and that

separation had not in fact taken place. A second movement of separation was then made, requiring a more appreciable effort. Returning almost at once, I was affected with some restlessness and distaste—the aftermath of self-determined effort without inner obedience.

In contrast to my experience, the author calling himself 'Yram' seems to use the method of self-effort persistently, as a matter of confirmed experimental policy.¹ It does not seem to me surprising, therefore, that we find continual references in his book to unpleasant or painful effects, for instance :

'I received a terrific slap in the face' (p. 52) ; 'a highly-strung nervous condition' (p. 53) ; 'grinning shapes . . . a nameless fear' (p. 57) ; 'nervous tension' (p. 64) ; 'this painful situation' (p. 65) ; 'an instinctive fear' (p. 69) ; 'furious with rage, my teeth clenched' (p. 101) ; 'kicked twice on the head' (p. 101) ; 'drenched with perspiration' (p. 108) ; 'unreasonable fear . . . paralysis' (p. 110).

The distinction between sub-heads (c) and (d)—self-effort and Obedience—may seem very slight and unimportant. But it is, in my view, the difference between fixation and freedom, fantasy and reality, bad and good. Naturally, however, Obedience is a very difficult faculty to develop, and sometimes a certain degree of effort from self may be warranted, as being the only method of voluntary action known to us or within our power.

From the terms in which the following separation is described, one could not judge whether it comes under sub-head (b), (c) or (d). The joy, and improvement over physical conditions, however, indicate that the prompting was chiefly by obedience :

[836] (August 1938). 'Waking up' during the night, in a balanced state, I was aware of lying on my front in bed. Nevertheless I rose, in a separated form, and stood on the floor, feeling joyful at being in a form more properly corresponding to my mind or real nature than my physical form. . . .

When the condition that I call Obedience is properly maintained, the separations that result are normally *free separations* or *mystical form liberations*, and are accordingly beyond the scope of this inquiry. But two simple cases of full separation may be given here, the first initiated by Obedience, and the second successively uplifted as a state of Obedience was voluntarily restored during the course of events. Since the second of these cases concluded in a state of Obedience, it seemed to end with a transition into *free separation*.

¹ *Practical Astral Projection*, London, undated.

[843] (October 1938). Becoming aware, during the night, of being in a dissociated state, I denied the temptation to make an effort from self, knowing this to be contrary to Obedience, and substituted an attitude of surrender. I was then lifted up and entered a state of noticeable spiritual freedom; but this was only general and for a few moments, because I was unable to sustain it.

[841] (October 1938). Having risen from the bed voluntarily, in separation, I noticed a general lack of freedom. The wish for better freedom led to a change of state in which I appeared to be floating, in a rather indefinite form. The further wish to feel solid ground (actually and representatively), associated with the recalling of Obedience, then led to the clear sensation of walking and a brief sight of spiritual sunlight, expressive of intelligence and love. On returning to the physical state it was as if the physical body had been awake as well as the real self within, and did not have to be jolted into wakefulness.

A longer and entirely specific revelation initiated by Obedience has been published in my paper on *The Vision of Archetypal Light*.¹

It appears to me likely that the ruling faculty which I have called Obedience may, with some other people, be replaced by a similar faculty better called Faith (there being apparently two contrasted types of mystic²). In either case, however, a poised centering on the Transcendent Unity, as a greater Wisdom with us or in us but not of us, is implied.

(F) *Parallel Consciousnesses in Two or More Spaces: Mixture of Spaces*

These are features often (perhaps always) found in the beginning of separations, or in transitions from one kind of separation to another. Following are four illustrations of varied types:

[1953] (10 August 1950). This long and elaborate separation was in two parts, the second following on the first after a short interval of apparent wakefulness. At the end of the second part I was raised rather high, as in the air, and the Divine Sun was shown me for about half a minute. The mental state of the soul was one of adoration at its glory, almost dissolving into tears from joy and loving humility. At intervals, however, while filled with this joy in the soul-life, I was also aware, by double-consciousness, of a lower manifestation according to which the body (or rather, another body) was gently rocking, in a horizontal position, face upwards. And around this lower state, or intermediate between it and the higher state, was a 'divine blackness', out of which the inner Sun had emerged or risen. Thus a material

¹ *The Review of Religion*, March 1954, pp. 153-4.

² See, for example, *Mysticism*, by Evelyn Underhill, London, 1930, p. 415ff.

light, a sublime darkness, and a supreme light, were simultaneously knowable, and two personal forms, one of them much more properly my own.

[1980] (4 November 1950). I became suddenly aware of a blaze of light, of spiritual quality, while apparently in a separated state. Because the effect was still indefinite, though vivid, I tried to increase the precision of perception by recalling the state of recollected 'one-pointedness'. This did not come spontaneously, however, and the effort was followed by awareness, in a lower state, as of the separated form on the floor beside the bed, while simultaneously the consciousness appeared in part to reside in another form in process of separating from the position in bed. Both these separated positions were surveyed (with disapproval) from a higher state.

[2285] (6 December 1953). In sleep I became suddenly aware of having been walking along a road through open country for some time. I proceeded to reflect (while still separated) whether I could be said to have been really separated in myself during that previous time, or whether perhaps it was an entity partly identified with me, whose memory had been carried over. A new accession of wakefulness then followed, which I described as being due to the Will becoming awake. But I was unable to see properly, the eyes being as if clouded over. The effort or wish to see more clearly resulted in a clearer but more material light, as of the physical world, displacing the other from the left. I considered carefully whether the new light should be described as more real or less real than the other, that is, whether the former light should be said to have any imaginative quality. But the new light was also beyond proper control, and since I seemed (while contemplating it) to be in bed (in a duplicate state), I began to weigh up whether or not to make a decision to leave the bed in voluntary separation . . . (a new separation, of lower type, then followed).

[534] (October 1935). I seemed to be awake in bed, the light being that of early morning, but was fully aware that the state was one of separation or incipient separation. On trying to rise, there was a definite hindering force as if I were being held back, so that muscular effort was needed. This, however, did not enable me to get free, and I then looked to the right and noticed, in a clear light, some strange objects which I could not bring into proper focus, close to the bed. Alongside I perceived, in a startling flash, a human head, turned away so that chiefly the back of it was seen, the person being instinctively named within me as 'myself'. Being unable to control an unreasoning reaction of fear, I reached out with a hand (in the separated state) in an endeavour to confirm or refute this presence. For a few moments I was conscious of the warm feel of the head and hair, being too startled, however, to see anything further. On becoming able to see again, the person was no longer there, and my attention was turned to the objects mentioned. Two spaces were clearly superposed. In the one was a representation of

the bed and the objects, as if out of focus (in a mental way); in the other, which was taken to be physical space (but which must have been a second duplicate space, since it was seen by interior eyes), the corner of the sheet and a handkerchief on a chair seemed to correspond with the out-of-focus objects (still visible) in position and outline. A strong persuasive influence tended to take hold of the mind, to make it believe that the strange objects were 'really' the sheet and the handkerchiefs, seen in a physical state, so that I was 'really awake after all'. Only the knowledge that the state was really one of separation enabled me to counter this persuasion and prevent an abrupt return to physical wakefulness.

This last description (a half-separation) illustrates the rare effect that I shall call *mergence*, whereby the phenomena of one space seem to adapt themselves and merge into the phenomena of another space of similar character, when a transition from the one space to the other is about to occur. Mergence sometimes occurs in a surprising way, as in another experience [1809], when a human being seen in a separated state moved carefully into a certain position, and then appeared to merge into the outline of a wardrobe in the 'duplicate' bedroom; and again a strong persuasion that it was 'really' the wardrobe that was being seen caused an abrupt waking—when it became obvious that there was in fact no resemblance in outline between the person and the wardrobe. Sometimes it is the duplicate bedroom that is adjusted so as to make it correspond better with the phenomena proper to an interior sphere, as in the following half-separation.

[860] (February 1939). I appeared to wake in the night, hearing the sound of the house dog scratching at the mat outside the bedroom (which it had quite possibly been doing). On looking up, in full wakefulness, I was surprised to see the hall light on, as a bright light under the door showed. A noise then began again, but this time was obviously made by the clumsy steps of a person coming into the room and approaching the bed, though the door had not been opened. . . . The form stopped beside the bed, then stretched out a hand and touched my hands as I lay on the bed. At this point I was unable to maintain steadiness of control, and with a slight jolt the state changed to a normal physical one. I then observed, first, that the hall light was not on; then, that I could not see the crack under the door from the bed. And finally, my physical hands were under the bedclothes, and so could not have been touched from the outside.

Experiences such as this seem to indicate that :

(i) there is a purely intellectual 'pattern' of the objects and scenes in this physical world (including bodies of living beings); but

(ii) that pattern can be actualized only by the power of

individual minds, whose influences are blended together so as to produce a more or less complete and rational synthesis in a duplicate state.

Such an hypothesis will also explain why the human form representative of the mind in a separated state may differ in locality and appearance from the physical body. For the intellectual pattern of the physical body is not necessarily very like the intellectual pattern of the mind ; and the two might therefore be actualized in quite different ways.

The hypothesis also explains the phenomenon of *doubles* (as in experience [534] above). For the intellectual pattern of the physical body might be actualized by any intelligent entities whose minds corresponded in some way with it, while we ourselves were actualized according to the state of our mind at the time.

Apart from the ordinary sense of bilocation that occurs when the interior body is just separating from the physical body, or just returning to it, published examples of simultaneous or mixed spaces are difficult to find. The following, from the M. and C. collection, seems to be an example :

I seem to know that my body is lying on the bed when I am walking through the apartment, or it is as though for a second I am going like lightning to lie on the bed, and then am up again. . . . Or perhaps I am in both places at once! (p. 166).

On the other hand the following account suggests to me strongly the state of *free* separation :

Usually when I leave the body it is in the semi-conscious state between waking and sleeping, and at times I seem to be living in two worlds simultaneously. I can see my body lying upon the bed and I can hear the voices in this world, and in the other state of existence (p. 66).

A very curious instance of mixed influence is the following :

I had been reading. The hall clock struck *one*, so I said to myself, 'I had better go to bed'. As I turned to the bed I saw *myself* lying there, on my back. I wondered if I were dead, but the 'corpse' moved, and then the bed was empty (p. 213).

(G) *Apparent Participation in Another Individual's Personality and Memory*

Two examples will make sufficiently clear what is meant by this :

[1914] (8 April 1950). During the night, in a state between waking and sleeping, the inner and outer spaces were recognized as in a con-

dition of balance, and a firm decision was made to step out of bed to the left, in a separated form, leaving all attachments. Whether the decision should be called mine or not remained doubtful, however, since on becoming separate I was aware of a division in consciousness, one part properly mine, the other part not properly mine, but lower, and observed by the higher part which was properly mine. As the separated form moved to the hall and into a room on the other side, the lower part found everything extremely familiar, a table in the centre of the room and an ash-tray upon it being particularly noted. But the higher part knew that these were not familiar at all, having no counterparts in my physical existence. The table and ash-tray were clearly and vividly seen, with a reality convincingly like that of the physical world, while the higher part was assessing the character of the state. Suddenly, but without abruptness, the room faded out both from view and spatially, as if the entity that was observing it became absorbed or withdrawn. For a moment there was an impression of blankness, and then gradually a more acceptable state, recognized as a character of space or unseen light, with the other entity no longer present, emerged into a definite perception. Physical wakefulness followed after two or three seconds.

[1756] (2 July 1948). I appeared, in separation, to be standing by a bed in a room where there were two other beds. Although the room was a strange one, from another point of view (as of another personality) it made a definitely familiar impression. The smoothness of the counterpane on the nearest bed was clearly discerned. From still another point of view I was conscious of the physical body in bed, as if separation had not occurred, while the tendency to separate was felt as a characteristic stress in the region of the solar-plexus. . . .

In the second of these experiences there were three personal consciousnesses, namely :

- (i) myself A, separated ;
- (ii) the other entity and its memory, known as if myself B, except for the memory ;
- (iii) myself C, still in bed.

I believe that what may be called 'the real I' (individuality, soul) is found in its purity and perfection only in mystical states ; that in lower states the personal life is still 'me', but is composite through being fused with darkening and inwardly conflicting influences from which it cannot detach itself (and does not even appear to wish to do so, because of fixation). Hence a lower 'me' has less ultimate validity than a higher or relatively pure one.

Tyrrell gives an interesting case that appears to offer clear support to a theory of this kind :

I was lying in bed cogitating about doing something extremely

agreeable but entirely selfish. I was suddenly aware of being in two places at once. One 'me' was still lying in bed looking as I normally do. The other 'me' was standing at the foot of the bed, very still, very straight, dressed in white with a Madonna-like veil over the head. I was aware of the extreme whiteness of the clothes. We then had a spirited discussion . . . I was definitely both 'me's' and conscious in both places simultaneously. . . . Each me could see the other, with its expected exterior surroundings all the time. The white 'me' felt sympathy, but contempt for the other 'me'. I may say that the white 'me' won. . . .¹

Consistently with the theory mentioned, and the illustrations just given of 'blended consciousnesses', the following interpretation may be offered: that the white 'me' was a blend of a higher 'me' and a more advanced 'guardian' entity, participating in the same personal manifestation; and that the other 'me' was also a blend, in which foreign and selfish persuasions were appropriated (because of fixation) and so seemed to be thoughts and desires of 'the real I'. But the lack of harmony with 'the real I' eventually resulted in those desires being rejected and the lower 'me' disintegrated.

(H) *Inner Awakening through Recognition of 'The Waters'*

In transitional states between the physical state and a psychical one, or between a psychical state and a mystical one, instead of the one space gradually or suddenly displacing the other, there is sometimes a kind of dissolution of the 'world' into a condition of shapeless fluidity, when all we are conscious of is a substantial movement as of currents eddying and interweaving in space. Then, in due course, the new 'world' and our new personal form are condensed out of 'the waters'. In these transitional states mental control is difficult, fantasy-influences sometimes take hold, and the separation may lapse into a dream of flying, floating, or swimming.

While the physical body is in a relaxed and partly dissociated state one may be able to discern a movement of currents eddying and interweaving within the form of the body. These seem to be almost material in character; they could easily be mistaken for physical sensations. But they have the evident effect of gradually releasing the body from fixation, and seem to be one of the means provided for bodily and spiritual refreshment during sleep. Then, when the currents have done their work of releasing us from fixation, one is ready to separate (or fall asleep). The following experience illustrates such a process, though communication of its

¹ *The Personality of Man*, by G. N. M. Tyrrell, London 1947, p. 195.

psychological and spiritual nature through the medium of words is almost impossible :

[2049] (13 July 1951). In a vividly objective half-separation, the body was represented as lying down and caught in fixation. An operation proceeded from within to throw off the constraints. There was a vivid calling forth of spontaneous manipulative movements and purified will-activity against antagonistic forces. Presently the fixation appeared to be thrown off, so that a free form emerged.

After separation, the movement seems to continue, but by then the separated form has partly condensed, so that it may seem to be gently floating, in a more or less determinate form (as in many published experiences).¹

If, during a floating or flying dream, recollection awakes through memory or understanding of the condition, usually the next thing that happens (in my experience) is that one becomes aware of 'the waters' as a fluctuating movement in inner space. The dream is then seen as fantasy, while 'the waters' are objective. Recollection must then be enhanced so that further fixation (which might induce a fantasy-like separation) is removed, and the inner form condenses properly. Sometimes the separated form still seems to be flying ; in which case it is usually best (in my opinion) to resolve to find the ground and walk normally. Then the state becomes more objective and rationally controllable. This is a common method of initiation, illustrated by the following four descriptions :

[2024] (18 March 1951). During a flying dream, reflection on the movement caused awareness of the inner currents and their gradual steadying. Upon the decision to adopt the motion of walking instead, my feet came to rest on the ground, the mental impression being definite and substantial. A dog like a setter was seen on the right, and I approached with a wish to fondle it. A return to the physical state quickly ensued, from some cause unknown.

[1021] (November 1940). In the course of a dream, while seeming to walk along a raised path, I became aware of flowing currents in space. Consciousness in separation followed, and objective perception of walking. The mind then became more recollected, so that there was a general view of sunlight, golden in quality. Buildings were around, and by a voluntary strengthening of recollection I gained some ability to bring these into clear perception, and see the bright sunlight on some of the walls. . . .

[1853] (1 October 1949). In a flying dream, reflection on the incongruous method of progress (by flapping the arms) caused wakefulness

¹ For example, M. and C., p. 163 : 'a gentle rocking sensation' ; p. 91 : 'I floated out of my body.'

within, followed by a decision to cease that movement and observe things rationally. The separated form then appeared horizontal, on its back. Its relation to the physical body at that time was obscure, but it appeared to be at a higher level, above the bed, and in slight movement. It then lifted up gradually to a normal walking position. During that process stars in the night sky were distinctly seen above. Proceeding to walk, I turned right, in at the gate of a house, the state now beginning to resemble dream, and the experience broke off.

[1268] (9 July 1942). I became aware of flying, in a state of separation. Studying the condition revealed a strange but vividly objective feeling of muscular action at the back of the shoulders, as if wings were being used. A beautiful panorama was seen below. . . .

V. DESCRIPTIONS SPECIALLY RELATING TO THE RETURN

After the above full discussion of the process of separation, few of these descriptions will need further comment.

(A) *Gradual Approximation of Bodily Forms*

[587] (8 January 1936). In a dream, after crossing a frozen rivulet, I proceeded to walk up rising ground covered with snow. As the path forked at a bush, I became conscious of the cool ease of the substance of the separated body. Then, by restraint of a temptation to become bodily excited, and by recollection of the familiar circumstances of separation, full inner wakefulness broke forth.

Instead of the snowy Winter, the scene was now glorious Spring. At the first sight of the sunlight and the fresh colours of the vegetation, being insecurely grounded, and swayed by the shock of surprise, I appeared to pass through the air, off the ground, with a kind of smooth bouncing motion; but by restraint of this tendency also, presently I began to walk steadily and to see more clearly.

The place resembled a small opening in a wood, or a corner of a park, not very much cultivated; for the grass was thick underfoot, and the colour a rich green. A few trees and bushes in flower were near at hand. There seemed to be small animals or birds on the grass a few yards in front, and these I understood to be embodiments of affection, from the feeling which entered the heart as I looked. But steadiness at the heart was not sufficiently developed in me, and as I looked, the animals changed to clumps of flowers, one being a small cluster of daffodils, clearly seen in their bright yellow colours. As this change occurred a bird flew up from the ground, rather like a dove, but with a lifeless appearance. Realization of my deficiency gave me a feeling of sorrow, with a touch of shame.

Continuing through the park, which now definitely took on the character of a wood, the way began to narrow, and the bushes and trees on either side began to close in. The trees around, and in front

especially, then began to grow taller as I passed further on, and the light grew darker, with a quality of awe, as when evening approaches in a solitary wood (this darkening appearance always heralds a necessary return to the physical world).

Realizing that the physical world was exerting its call, I first made an unavailing (and foolish) attempt to pray for light to be continued, and then perforce yielded to Providence. Very smoothly and gently the inner form of consciousness became lifted off the ground, and equally gently inclined backwards until it appeared to rest horizontally about five or six feet above the ground. During this process, the inner space gradually melted away, at the same time as the space of a parallel world¹ began to appear, both spaces being recognizable at once. Next, as the parallel world became predominant, the (inward) body began to be lowered into coincidence with the physical body, whose position was now clearly discerned. At the same time, the light of the other world began to close in, a boundary having been formed between it and the apparent light of the physical world, visible from a duplicate state. Then, lastly, as the arms seemed to come into coincidence with their physical counterparts, there came a flooding of life-energy, with a powerful and bitter tingling, entering at the solar-plexus and spreading through the body. With this, the connection between the spaces was complete, and consciousness appeared again in the physical world.

[1387] (4 October 1944). At the end of a separation of moderate length, I was lifted up and smoothly carried backwards into gradual conjunction with the physical body. While moving into the horizontal position it was suggested to me that I should alter the orientation of the separated body, and see what happened. A partial turn, following the suggestion, was made to the right; but the separated body was compelled back again to the face-upwards position as it became more horizontal.

One of the M. and C. cases (that of Dr R. B. Hout) shows a return of rather similar kind :

... as the pull of the body became stronger and less easily governed, I suddenly stiffened in my astral form, assumed a position parallel to and immediately above the physical counterpart and dropped into it. The reassociation of the two vehicles occasioned a slight jolt ... and I was back in the physical again (p. 120).

I have never myself observed any stiffening of the separated form, which is always perfectly relaxed.

By the 'solar-plexus' I mean a centre of psychical sensation, often completely vivid and real, placed (so far as I can tell) about one or two inches above the navel, and perhaps two inches within the body.

¹ By the 'parallel world' I mean a space very close to, or like, physical space, but not necessarily a duplicate one.

(B) *Direct Fusion of Spaces*

[422] (August 1934). At the conclusion of a short separation of fantasy type, not otherwise noted, I was resting on open ground in a rather bright light when the need for a return was recognized, the state being at that time relatively free from fantasy. I appeared to be brought back so that the conscious form came into coincidence with the physical form, but not so that physical space was finally confirmed. The bright light and open ground in the one space could be perceived, at the same time as the body appeared to be in bed in the other space. Moreover, by the exercise of a free choice and decision, the former space could be more and more confirmed, so that the latter faded away, and once again I appeared to lie on the open ground in a bright light. And again, by relaxing the intention, the space as of the bedroom could be gradually restored, while the other space faded away. In fact, the two spaces were held for a few seconds in perfect balance, both being as if present simultaneously, and twice the space of the open ground and bright light was voluntarily restored before a final confirmation of physical space was made.

[698] (25 April 1936). At the end of a varied separation during which I was walking on grassy ground I realised that a return was imminent. Kneeling down in resignation, I felt, at the same time (the two spaces being superposed or alternating spontaneously) the grassy ground, and the feel of the sheets on the physical body. I compared carefully the two types of perception as regards vividness, reality and general spiritual quality, before the physical perceptions were allowed to supplant the inner ones.

Two experiences of this kind are described by 'Yram' :

... without completely reincorporating myself, I found myself at the exact point of balance where the material sensitivity passes into the next body, or plane. By a mere act of will I found myself able to incline the balance towards one point or the other. As soon as I favoured the idea of projection ... I began to feel lighter. ... As soon as I brought my mind back to my physical body ... I could feel the slight roughness of the sheets. ... Taking my mind back towards the idea of projection. ... I once more found myself in the state which I had just left, and began to enjoy the peace, the cool sweetness, and the inexpressible sense of well-being of this state (op. cit., p. 49).

I hardly formed the idea that I wanted to return to my body when, immediately, I clearly felt the bed on which I was lying. ... Did I wish to leave it? Like a flash all those feelings disappeared. I could see my body stretched out on the bed ... (op. cit., p. 74).

(C) *'False Awakenings' of Two Kinds*

In the first kind of 'false awakening' one believes one has made a proper return to the physical world, or has become properly

awake in it after being asleep, only to discover after a few moments that it is really a duplicate state. In the second kind, one makes what appears to be a normal return to a dissociated state (which should duplicate the physical one), but finds the bedroom quite a strange one. One illustrative example of each kind is given :

[133] (December 1932). After a short separation in which difficulty in breathing was noticeable, I returned to the physical state (or so it appeared) and took deep breaths, glad to breathe again more freely. After a few moments, however, I noticed that the feeling as I breathed was not quite as in the physical world. In fact, coincidence of the spaces had not occurred, and I was still in a duplicate space. On recognition of this, a proper coincidence followed.

[1131] (26 August 1940). Towards the end of a fantasy-separation I became aware of the necessity to return, and the state then became subject to a high degree of reflective control. The separated form began to rise in the air, and after an unavailing attempt had been made to prolong the separation, a view was presented of the ceiling above, seen as by looking up from a horizontal form. But there was a pattern on it, rather as if it were linoleum (unlike the ceiling in the physical bedroom). From that position the separated form was gradually let down into coincidence with the physical form, free watchfulness being maintained throughout. On looking round, as in physical space (but recognizably in a duplicate space), I noticed that the room was larger than the physical bedroom and quite different in the impression given by the furniture, windows, etc. I rose again from the bed by a voluntary movement, knowing the possibility of doing so in separation. My form was smaller and far lighter than the physical body ; and full of a comforting joy in the freedom and acceptability of that form, expressive of the mind, I began spontaneously to dance, joying in the lightness and smooth beautiful movements of the limbs. A return followed without noticeable process.

A particularly striking 'false awakening' is described in the 'Manstead Case' (M. and C., p. 88) :

Early in the afternoon I awoke to find myself walking through the hall which adjoined my bedroom . . . I was half-way down the hall when I woke up . . . 'Of all things!' I said to myself, 'I have been walking in my sleep! I surely will catch more cold.' . . . I turned around and went back, and as I passed into my bedroom through the open door, I was shaken with amazement—there I was still lying in bed! . . . I was so real that I kept feeling myself to make sure that this was not a hallucination. . . . Then I remembered falling or gliding sideways, and struggling to get back into my body, which was like being put into a case. . . .

(D) *Lapse into other Non-Physical Conditions*

Besides lapsing into a state of simple dissociation preparatory to

full coincidence of the bodies, a separation may lapse into (a) half-separation, (b) spatial-opening, (c) free separation, or (d) dream or fantasy-separation.

False Awakenings come under category (a), and it is not necessary to give further examples. Only one case under category (b) is within my experience, and it is not necessary to quote this. An example of (c) is [841], already given, and of (d), [1202].

(E) *Return through Earth or Water*

[800] (September 1937). In separation, I rose from the ground upon consciousness of the ability to do so, and floated past trees, the body remaining vertical. The comforting feeling of the warmth of the sun was felt in the limbs. Then the separated form was caused to sink back, descending into a darker state, so that there was a strange but vivid impression that it was sinking through the surface of the earth into a grave.

[900] (October 1939). After voluntarily descending to the ground in separation I felt clearly the touch of my feet on it, but almost at once seemed to descend further, so as to pass through the ground. As this happened, a stress of life-substance was felt in the breast, and I awoke in the physical world.

I do not regard these experiences as the result of fantasy. What I have called fantasy-constructs are the creation of subjective pre-possessions, fixed ideas, or self-centred thinking, made habitual in this world and so sticking in the memory regardless of objective inner realities. Hence, in a separated state, they impose themselves on what is objective, as a kind of distortion. The above experiences, however, were recognized at the time as being a two-fold manifestation—one, the 'world' known in separation, the other, an objective and significant representation of the change, such as occurs in mystical states. Accordingly, there was no fear or distaste, only sorrow at one's state becoming lower and darker.

Such significant representations have been illustrated before, in the impression of a river [117], or of sandy ground [1923], between two spheres. The surface of the earth similarly represents a boundary between spheres of fixation and spheres of freedom, and human beings actually appear to sink or rise through it according as fixation takes hold or is gradually released. The apparent motion thus objectively represents the actual condition of the mind.

This being so, restoration of Obedience overcomes the sinking tendency, as in the following brief extract :

[1352] (5 March 1943). Towards the beginning of a long separation

I began to sink downwards, so that I seemed to be half below the surface of the earth. On steadying the mind, through Obedience, I rose to the surface again (the separation then continued).

The following experience, illustrative of sinking through water, evidently involves a very considerable fantasy-element. It ends in an obvious mixture of (1) quasi-physical manifestations, (2) significant ideas, corresponding to the process, and (3) fantasy-constructs due to loss of self-command, and it illustrates the unfortunate results that may follow on a lapse from Obedience (which was hardly in evidence at all in this experience) :

[2080] (24 November 1951). Towards the end of a vivid quasi-physical separation into a strange house, I tried to get out by ascending a small staircase. But the way up suddenly contracted, and realizing that fantasy-obstacles were being imposed I turned back again. The floor of the room towards the left began to take on the appearance of sloping away in darkness, and almost at once it was as if I were being drawn, or were gradually slipping, towards a rectangular pit or well of water placed there (the details were not discernible, but the significance of darkness, depth and water, was frighteningly strong). Involuntarily struck with fear at this situation, and having lost poise of mind, I called out for help, in an attitude of prayer. Suddenly there was the sound of someone hurrying down the stairs from above. A man like a coloured servant appeared, and with an anguished look on his face he tried to pull me back into the room. But by that time I was far sunk down, my head almost level with the floor. There came the vivid sound of rushing water in my ears, and I awoke in the physical world. I had never forgotten that the experience was a separation. But understanding (from the head) is unable to save us from an unpleasant situation, without Obedience (from the heart).

(F) *Other Symbolic Returns*

In this section I give brief references to a few published cases illustrating returns that may also be called symbolical, in a loose sense, but that are of types unfamiliar to me. These are all taken from the M. and C. collection.

(The Cole Case, p. 61). On my left there was a bright light, while on my right there was a dark tunnel of swirling shadows, into which, after I had said, 'I will go back', I turned. There was a tiny light at the far end of this tunnel of shadows, and I struggled instinctively towards it, while shadows rushed past me. . . . It seemed a long time before I managed to reach the light at the end . . . then I was physically awake again.

(The Marks Case, p. 91). In a short time I floated over my physical body and sank down into it. I seemed to go in through the pores of the skin.

(The Sidney Case, p. 149). Immediately I found myself rushing back, down into my physical body . . . striking first the head, where I entered and went right through the full length of my physical body . . . with a violent shuddering sensation.

(The Rogers Case, p. 95). Then I felt something pulling me downward and when I hit my physical body I seemed to bounce. . . . Then to my amazement I turned around inside my body—revolved from head to foot.

(The Beth Case, p. 191). In each case . . . he approached and went back through a cleft in his head . . . exactly in the middle of the skull, and extending several centimetres forward from the back. . . . In his second interiorisation . . . instead of slipping in easily, he found he had to make three distinct pushes, before he could pass through the crevice into his physical body.

(The Manstead Case, p. 89). Then I remembered falling or gliding sideways, and struggling to get back into my body, which was like being put into a case.

(The Parker Case, p. 63). The strange sensation . . . as if a bag were being pulled down over my head and onward to my feet, came over me.

(The Annenkof Case, p. 200). I re-entered my body through my feet. [On another occasion.] I approached my body and tried to re-enter it . . . I felt it absorbing me immediately, like a sheet of blotting paper, or as a sponge absorbs water.

(The Riggs Case, p. 79). I entered my body through my mouth.

These examples evidently illustrate effects of *mergence*, in some cases influenced by fantasy. For the separated form is in one space, and the physical body in another. It seems to me, however, that the *mergence* is not directly into physical space but into a duplicate or possibly more archetypal form of the physical body, convincingly felt to be the same. The actual physical body could not, in my view, be perceived by the non-physical sense organs of the separated body.

After the *mergence*, a further slight jolt or abrupt change in the state of consciousness would as usual be required to convert the still dissociated state into the normal state of consciousness in the physical world. Light may be thrown on the underlying nature or causes of this 'jolt' by experiences such as those coming under the next head, which is the last in this survey of methods of return.

(G) *Absorption of or in Other Personal Entities on Return*

The two principal illustrations to be given under this head are taken from experiences of exceptional power and significance, not at all 'symbolical', though difficult to describe in plain terms. It is as if one passes within the representation of the return, whatever it may be, to discover something of the subtle mechanism controlling it from a more 'intelligible' level. The quotations must be brief and the discussion very cursory, lest the main issue be confused by the raising of perplexing questions concerning the projected body and the knowledge of other people in a non-physical state.

In the one experience ([2421], 6 March 1954) I came face to face with an entity of 'evil' tendency, but steadily objective control was maintained for 15 seconds. A certain change occurring then, the influence was no longer kept entirely at bay, and

a momentary consciousness of a kind of paralysis because of that influence was followed almost at once by the remarkable effect as of a man-spirit entering into me and violently throwing my arms about in order to escape. I seemed to be hurled from that state back to the physical world, returning with a sharp jolt at the solar-plexus.

In this experience there were evidently four personal structures, each with its own kind of integration, and of thought, feeling and character-disposition: (1) that of the obsessing entity, studied for 15 seconds, (2) that of my free consciousness, out of the body, fully recollected and in an acceptable form, (3) that of the 'man-spirit', who was not really myself, and (4) that of the physical personality to which I returned, and which apparently included the entity (3) and perhaps others as well. When the 'man-spirit' entered, there was an indubitable perception that it was other than myself, though intimately similar in some general way. Then, on the restoration of the physical personality, it was as if a blend of personal structures had occurred, thus making the physical personality composite and derivative (as, indeed, I always feel it to be, in relation to the purer recollected consciousness).

The other experience to be principally mentioned ([1224], 3 January 1942) was a long one in three distinct parts, the second part mystical, while the third was at a lower level but steadily objective. In the third part I approached a tall man, in a room where many people were about, and stood face to face with him for about five seconds. I became aware of an intention on his part to press closer, and this filled me with a certain amount of fear. Retaining control, I moved away to another part of the room; but presently, looking back, I saw the man approaching from

behind. There then came the strange but very clear impression that he was part of myself (i.e. my outer or physical self), and that it was impossible for me, at that time, to keep myself (i.e. my true self) distinct. A deep sorrow at having to relinquish my purer nature afflicted me. For a moment or two, it seemed difficult to say who I was, since I had partly taken on the physical personality again, though still remaining to some extent in the purer recollected consciousness and form proper to me in that separated state. Then I awoke in the physical personality, with only an analytical or remembered knowledge of my purer self, like a free conscience within.

Some experiences showing a very similar phenomenon on return from *free separation* are described by Mrs Willett.¹ Thus: 'I can't remember who I am. I know I'm somebody and I'm all coming together, you know, and the bits don't fit' (p. 149). The state in which other *monads* are freely distinguished from the monad which is our true individual being, while nevertheless we remain mystically unified with them, is described by her in the following terms: 'The room seemed full of unseen presences and of their blessing; it was as if barriers were swept away and I and they became one. I had no sense of personality in the unseen element—it was just there and utterly satisfying' (p. 181). *Personality*, it seems, is appropriate for the description of a constellation of monads, but not for the description of a single monad. This experience of Mrs Willett's, incidentally, is one that I should classify as a *mystical liberation*—deeper than a *free separation*, but not sufficiently explicit to reveal the 'intelligible' human form of the monad.

An experience of blending with another monad (or perhaps, rather, with a personality), so that the two are only just kept distinct, is testified to in Mrs Willett's reference to 'an intensely vivid impression of Fred's presence. I can only describe it (she says) by saying I felt myself so blending with him as almost to be becoming him' (p. 181).

All these types of experience, as well as (less clearly) most of the other cases of separation mentioned, thus point to a very great difference in structure between our free personal consciousness in a separated state, clear of fixation, and the normal state of our personality when we are immersed in this world. If the former be described as a *monad* which is the expression of our proper individuality, then these experiences (as Lord Balfour argued in the case of Mrs Willett) exhibit the physical personality as a con-

¹ 'A Study of the Psychological Aspects of Mrs Willett's Mediumship,' etc., by Gerald William, Earl of Balfour. *Proc. S.P.R.*, 43, 1935.

stellation or Platonic Republic of monads, of which only a certain 'battle-array' is openly presented to the world.

Going into further details, it is evident that when that constellation is re-formed after separation, and we become conscious again in our physical personality, the other monads are no longer seen as separate. So the fluctuating thoughts, feelings and intentions, in the midst of which we are, inevitably seem to be our own, obscure or vivid according to the closeness of the union between us and the monads in which these things are concentrated. But in so far as fixation is overcome, and the constellation begins to be freely analysed, we see the particular thoughts, feelings and intentions as separate. And the monad which is properly our own then takes on the character of a conscience in command of the whole situation—like the philosopher-guardians in Plato's Republic.

The puzzling experiences, mentioned above, of simultaneous spaces and consciousnesses, now obtain an easy explanation on the ground that they are simultaneous *monadic* consciousnesses with which we, and probably others too, have blended temporarily, the release of fixation in the separated state having permitted a partial analysis.

From the point of view developed in this section—a view to which the evidence taken as a whole seems to lead strongly—the process of separation is essentially a simplification of the physical personality, by the sloughing-off of some or all of the improperly harmonized monads in it. Hence we arrive also at a reasonable explanation of the fact that those who have experienced separation almost invariably state or imply that their conscious life has thereby become *purser*, better harmonized, and more truly their own, even sometimes to the extent of really finding themselves alive at last after a physical life that in comparison seems like a dream or prison :

'I must come back, you know. It's just like waking up in prison. . . .'¹

'For the first time I knew what it means to LIVE. . . .'²

¹ Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

² Muldoon and Carrington, *op. cit.*, p. 81.