

Reincarnation, Part 2 – The Test and the Meaning
by Jerry Jacoby at
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READING

In the introduction to the book *Memories of the Afterlife: Life Between Lives Stories of Personal Transformation*, Michael Newton writes:

“As a result of the forces of reincarnation, we are all products of our past physical lives on Earth as well as our spiritual soul experiences between lives. The soul of every person on this planet retains all former karmic influences of cause and effect from many sources, and these forces impact our current feelings and behavior. Thus, while people may appear to be functioning normally on the outside, we can have deep-seated metaphysical provocations of distress that are masked from traditional medical doctors, mental health professionals, and even from ourselves. There are difficult episodes in our current lives when we don’t comprehend what is driving us in ways that seem irrational. The underlying reasons for these strange sensations are typically obscure, lying far below the surface of our consciousness. Most people will do anything to expose their internal demons, but where should they look?

“This book is about the self-discovery of hidden knowledge contained within the unconscious mind and what unlocking this sacred information through hypnosis has meant for people therapeutically. From the hypnosis subjects whose cases are detailed here, we will see how revelations from past incarnations and the afterlife have positively affected their conscious minds, providing keys of understanding to a variety of psychological problems. These recovered spiritual memories have brought greater meaning and empowerment into

their lives. This book is meant to inspire and bring new hope to people everywhere who wish to see design and order in their existence.” –p. xi

Design and order. You read those words a lot in Newton’s books.

SERMON

Review

In the first sermon of this series, I began by talking about evidence and the criterion for considering anecdotal evidence. Then I turned to the work of Ian Stevenson, who began his work in 1957 and during his career collected more than 2,500 cases of children who remembered the details of previous lives. I pointed out that it is difficult to explain these cases without reincarnation. Then I spoke briefly about Brian Weiss, who accidentally discovered reincarnation in the 1980s with a patient he called Catherine. Over the next two decades he collected more than 4,000 cases where the people under hypnosis remembered past lives. Further, many details of those past lives have been verified by historical records.

I spent most of my time telling you about the work of Michael Newton, who also discovered reincarnation accidentally. In addition, Newton also discovered the Spirit World, where our souls spend time between incarnations. He wrote about his findings in the book *Journey of Souls*, which was the textbook for an adult education course last January and February. Over the course of his career Newton accumulated more than 7,000 cases of people who told about the Spirit World. I summarized all this information with what I called an organizing generalization that very briefly and incompletely described the activities of souls in the Spirit World. That sermon is available on UUCM’s website, uugrassvalley.org, by clicking on the sermons button.¹

It seems appropriate to make some connections with other belief systems at this point, because many people are uncomfortable with the word “soul.” On October 25, 2009, Rev. Meghan preached about Hinduism. The Hindu term Atman refers to the immortal aspect of our being, and is clearly analogous to what Newton referred to with the word “soul.” Another term used commonly by modern psychologists is our Inner Self, or our SELF (in all caps), or our True Self without all the trappings of modern society. Our True Self is who we really are underneath all the masks we display to the world in order to keep us safe. But whatever word you choose, it is clear, to me at least, that we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

The Test

Without doubt if you hadn't been exposed to reincarnation before last August 1st, the Spirit World and the organizing generalization would have seemed pretty far-fetched. At the end of that sermon I even made the outrageous claim that the paradigm I described could be tested, thus making it a legitimate theory. Remember that in science to be legitimate a theory must be refutable. That is, it must be possible to perform an experiment or a test that may, in principle, refute the theory. My claim about the reincarnation paradigm is based on two cases deeply buried in two of Newton's books. In *Destiny of Souls*, Newton has Case 46 about Maureen and Dale in current time. Maureen was regressed to a life in San Francisco in July 1923, when she was Samantha. She tells of attending a party with her guy, named Rick, and of him getting drunk. They left the party and drove south down the Pacific Coast Road. Rick missed a sharp curve and drove over a cliff. The car crashed into the ocean.

Dale was regressed next, and while hypnotized told of experiencing the life as Rick in July 1923. He described the same party, the same drive, and the same accident. His point of view was different, of course, from the driver's seat, but it is clear that it was the same accident.²

Now before anyone goes to the morgue of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, looking for reports of accidents along the Pacific Coast Road south of San Francisco in July 1923, let me remind you that Newton has deliberately changed the details of all of his stories to protect the privacy of his clients. Therefore, the accident may actually have occurred north of San Francisco, the date was almost certainly not July 1923, and the sharp curve may have actually overlooked a lake instead of the ocean. That's not the point.

The point is that two different people in present time described the same scene that happened in their previous lives.

A story of the same kind is reported in chapter 25 of *Memories of the Afterlife*. Ron and Sharon in current time worked together, Ron as a CEO and Sharon as his subordinate. During regression, they both described lives together and meeting one another in the Spirit World. This case is true to the subtitle: *Stories of Personal Transformation*. I commend it to you for study.³

The only problem with these two cases is that with the first, Maureen and Dale, both people were regressed by Michael Newton, and with the second, Ron and Sharon, both were regressed by Jonathan Yorks. Thus, an extreme skeptic could claim that the second person being regressed was somehow influenced by the therapist.

Nevertheless, these and other stories lead to the following paradigm test that takes several minutes to tell. The test begins with someone in this community having the courage to start.

It would have been me, except that I've told too many people about my Life Between Lives experience. So let's call this person John. It also needs a cast of cooperating therapists in the Michael Newton Institute. I mention this, because all of the therapists in the Institute have subscribed to a strict code of ethics that you can read on the Institute's website.⁴ So, to begin, John has a session with one of the therapists in the Institute. The session needs to be modified from the usual, in that he specifically goes to his next previous life. For us older people that might be a life in the nineteenth century. For you younger people it might be a life early in the twentieth century. The chief modification is that before progressing forward in that life to the death scene, and thence into the Spirit World, the therapist takes the person backward in that life. The two of you are searching in that life for significant scenes, turning points, and crucial events. At the conclusion of each of these scenes the therapist freezes the action, as they all know how to do, and then asks John if he recognizes the souls of any other people in the scene. From my experience this recognition, if it happens at all, will be nearly instantaneous. Let us suppose, for example, that he recognizes two people in his present life—call them Bill and Sue.

After the key scenes have been explored and people recognized, the therapist takes John into the Spirit World in the usual way. In the Spirit World there are two places he needs to visit: He needs to spend some time with his soul group and also in the space of life selection. This last place has various names: In *Journey of Souls* it's called the Ring of Destiny. This room of life selection is where preparations for your current life took place and where your current body was selected. This is also where you will discover your purpose for this life. These two places are also where Bill and Sue agreed to be part of John's present life, and

where karmic issues will be discovered. It is also the place where the most healing of present-life issues happens most often. Believe me: It's worth your time.

When John's session is completed—for reference, it took four and a half hours in my case—he writes down everything he can remember about the session as soon as he can. He'll go home with compact disks that contain an oral record of the session. In addition, there will almost certainly be a great deal more than the oral record. It will take some time to write it down, but remember this is for science and all humanity. When John is satisfied he has captured the session on paper, he has the pages notarized, seals them in an envelope, and stores it in a safe place. Most important, the only words he says to Bill and Sue are, “Do it, and use a different therapist.”

Next, and once again this is for science, Bill and Sue have past life and between-life sessions using different therapists in the Newton Institute. After their sessions, they make a written record, have it notarized, seal it in an envelope, and store it in a safe place. Then by mutual agreement, John, Bill, and Sue meet in a public place—say right here in this chapel—and all three of them open their envelopes at the same time. I predict the event will be well attended. We'll maybe even invite the press.

Possible Outcomes

There are a myriad of possible outcomes, but let me discuss four possibilities and their implications. First, what was a significant event for John may not have been noteworthy for Bill or Sue. So these two people may not encounter the same events that drew John's attention. We would have to consider this to be a null outcome that doesn't prove anything one way or another. So we try again.

A second, more serious possibility, is that John, Bill, and Sue still have karmic issues to work out in this lifetime, so they will get to a point in the session and be blocked by their guides. This happened in a case reported by Newton in *Life Between Lives*. Kyle in this life still had major choices to make in his relationship with his estranged wife Diane.⁵ When this point was reached in Kyle's session, it came to an abrupt halt. While this outcome would be disappointing from the point of view of this project, it could very well be extremely valuable to John, Bill, and Sue.

A third possibility is that all three of them encounter the same crucial scene but don't recognize one another in that scene. In the same category is the possibility that the scene is dramatic and truly important, as reported by John, but neither Bill nor Sue recognize it. For them the event didn't happen. I am honest enough to acknowledge that this outcome would call this entire paradigm into question.

And finally, it is possible that John, Bill, and Sue encounter the same crucial scene in that previous time, they recognize one another, and they all experience the same scene from their different points of view. Just as different witnesses to an auto accident, to pick an example, will rarely agree on each and every detail of what happened, it is always clear that an accident did indeed happen, and they are describing that same accident. I think it is fair to say that this outcome would be a verification of the paradigm.

As I suggested a few minutes ago, I have already told too many people about my session with Jeri Roraback, so it could be argued by an extreme skeptic that I have somehow influenced their recall. For the purpose of this project, we can't have that. The huge problem facing many people sitting in this room, and indeed throughout the wider culture, is this: We might have to change our view of reality. Change is always difficult. It is especially difficult

to change a long and cherished belief about how the universe works. As an incentive, learning your purpose for being here can be one of the most positively transformative experiences of your life.

The Meaning

At the conclusion of my Part I sermon, I posed a question: “So what? Suppose reincarnation is a fact of our existence. So what’s the big deal?” I would like to begin by quoting Ian Stevenson, as reported by Tom Shroder:

In general, I tend not to claim too much for the spiritual benefits of proving reincarnation. When I first went to India, I met with a swami there, a member of a monastic order. I told him about my work and how I thought it would be quite important if reincarnation could be proven, because it may help people to lead more moral lives if they knew they would come back after death. There was a long silence, a terrible silence, and finally he said, ‘Well, that’s very good, but here, reincarnation is a fact, and we have just as many scoundrels and thieves as you do in the West.’ I’m afraid that rather deflated my missionary zeal.⁶

I agree with Stevenson on this point. I have no grand goals such as achieving world peace or saving the environment or preventing climate change. My goals are all small and personal.

One important implication is that I no longer fear death. In fact, I'm looking forward to returning to my true home in the Spirit World and having some R&R. And with modern hospice care, I'm also not terribly afraid of the process of getting there, either. A rather mundane implication is that when I'm done with this body, then I'll be done with it forever. So I've left written instructions with the executor of my estate to cremate my body and spread the ashes in a flower garden somewhere so they can do some good.

In the same vein, I'm also not afraid of anyone else's death either. With people I have been close to in some way, I will grieve their loss from this life, and I think my grief will be on a more mature level than it would otherwise be. If we have unfinished business there will be another lifetime to work out that business, and another lifetime after that. I've come to take the long view on many issues and have achieved a measure of serenity—at least most of the time.

One of my personal goals is greater understanding of how the Universe works, and reincarnation has supplied much of that understanding. The law of Karma means that deeds done with an incorrect attitude and motivation have to be balanced somehow. So one of my goals is to avoid making bad Karma for myself. Reincarnation explains the problem of moral injustice. One of the age-old questions is why good people sometimes suffer and wicked people sometimes prosper. My understanding, to use a metaphor, is that we are seeing only one chapter of a very long book. If you jump into the middle of a typical novel, say, then you may read about the villain making a fool of the hero or heroine—or worse. But without the context of the whole book, there's no way to know the truth.

Indeed some of the apparently awful things that have happened to me have been blessings in disguise. In the late summer of 1986, I was told by my supervisor that I was not receiving

a raise that year, because I was the worst employee he had ever had. You see, I had made a mistake a month earlier and, despite having several accomplishments of note in the preceding months, I got on his special list. That evaluation was hard to take, and I had to ask for help from a counselor. She coached me on what I needed to say and do, which took almost more courage than I had. To make a long story short, I eventually got another job, which led to some amazing synchronicities, two of which I told you about in an earlier sermon.⁷ What I came to understand is that prior to the summer of 1986 I was in a very comfortable rut, and the kick in the back side, so to speak, was what I needed to get out of that rut. So, after a few years, with the perspective to time, I came to see that not getting a raise that year was a very good thing.

Another personal goal is to develop a more intimate relationship with my Spirit Guide.⁸ There have been times when it seems to be right in the room with me, when I have felt like pulling up a chair and inviting it to have a seat and the two of us just hang out together. Most of the time, no words need to be spoken. No great earth-shaking conversation. Just be there ... together.

One more subject, and then we'll move on: Free will. The philosophical arguments here are endless, but the evidence I see around me is that we have the ability to make choices—meaningful choices—in our lives. I also admit that earlier in my life I mostly reacted out of habit, in contrast to pausing for a second or two and making a choice about how to respond. The evidence also suggests that something more than ninety percent of our decisions are habitual in nature. Nevertheless, the possibility for meaningful choice is always present.

... we can choose to increase our capacity to love or be compassionate; we can choose to perform the little acts of kindness that bring us internal satisfaction; we can choose generosity over selfishness, respect over prejudice. In every aspect of our lives we can choose to make the loving decision, and by doing so, our souls will evolve.⁹

The Montessori Model

There is a model, or a template, for living that I have heard called the Montessori model for life. Recall that in Montessori schooling there are work stations placed around a classroom. The children, being naturally curious, begin at one of the stations, where they work on some lesson. When they've learned that lesson, they move on to the next station which has its lesson. By the time the child has gotten all around the room, the clever teacher has replaced the lesson in the first station with a more advanced lesson, and so it goes.

This model was first written down by Chérie Carter Scott and has been called the Rules for Being Human. The word "rules" is perhaps an unfortunate choice; better might have been guidelines or formula or the way. "They form the foundation of how we can live a fulfilling, meaningful life."¹⁰ The first guideline is that, as a spiritual being, "You will receive a body." As I said earlier, the evidence indicates we are spiritual beings having a human experience. The first generic lesson is acceptance, and I will speak about a few aspects of acceptance whenever I preach again. The second guideline is that "You will be presented with lessons." Each of us has specific lessons we are here to learn. Yours may be overcoming greed or envy. Or learning compassion. And I have to tell you, the grading system is different than in our schools. There are no written exams where you have multiple

choice or even essay questions. It's all demonstration—you've learned compassion, for example, when you demonstrate compassion. Generosity when you're consistently generous. Courage when you're courageous. And so on. When you have a Life Between Lives session, visit the Spirit World, and go to the room of life selection, your specific lessons just might become clear to you. Consequentially, instead of thrashing around in life, trying to understand why you're here and what the heck is going on, a Life Between Lives session may give you answers, which in turn will give you purpose.

The third guideline serves to eliminate guilt: "There are no mistakes, only lessons." Under this guideline are the character traits of compassion, forgiveness, ethics, and humor, each of them worthy of more than one sermon. The fourth guideline is where reincarnation appears directly: "A lesson is repeated until learned." If we are here in this life to learn courage, for instance, and if we don't demonstrate courage in some life situation, then we need to have patience with ourselves, because we will have an opportunity to learn courage in some future situation. And so it is with all the other three dozen or so generic lessons we all have to learn.

I would like to close with the words of Nancy Hajek, a therapist in Nashville, Tennessee:

Being human, we blanket ourselves from our greater purpose and prior intention. Our lives on Earth tend to separate us from the body of our work as souls and leave us grappling not only with the angst of the moment but with its resonant mumbling from the past. Sometimes I think it remarkable that we glean as much as we do from a lifetime! For James [the subject of her story], recalling his immortality was like shaking off sleep, and with it the blunders that can come

with drowsiness. His sense of himself has shifted; he is now aware of his courageously inventive soul and at home in a universe supported by wisdom, suffused with light, and surrounded by love.¹¹

May it be so for each and every one of you.

Acknowledgment

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References

- 1 Jerry Jacoby, *Reincarnation, Part I: The Facts and the Questions*, delivered on August 1, 2010, at the Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains. See the website www.uugrassvalley.org, click on the sermons button, and scroll down.
- 2 Michael Newton, *Destiny of Souls*, Llewellyn Publications, 2000. This is Case 46, p. 266-273.
- 3 Michael Newton, editor, *Memories of the Afterlife: Life-Between-Lives Stories of Personal Transformation*, Llewellyn Publications, 2009. This story is chapter 25, “Evolution of a Spiritual Partnership,” p. 235-244.
- 4 The website for The Michael Newton Institute for Life Between Lives Hypnotherapy is www.newtoninstitute.org, where a list of members is available.

- 5 Michael Newton, *Life Between Lives Hypnotherapy for Spiritual Regression*, Llewellyn Publications, 2004. This case is reported in the chapter “Blocking by the Client’s Guide,” p. 85-91.
- 6 Tom Shroder, *Old Souls: The Scientific Evidence for Past Lives*, Simon & Schuster, 1999, p. 94.
- 7 Jerry Jacoby, *SYNCHRONICITIES – Communications from Spirit*, delivered on May 24, 2009, at the Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains. See the website www.ugrassvalley.org, click on the sermons button, and scroll down.
- 8 *Life Between Lives*, op cit, Appendix, The Way of Souls: *Spiritual Principles*, p. 211-213.
- 9 Brian Weiss, *Same Soul, Many Bodies*, Free Press, 2004, p. 17.
- 10 Chérie Carter Scott, *If Life Is a Game, These Are the Rules*, Broadway Books, 1998, p. 5.
The other “rules” or “guidelines” are also from Carter Scott’s book.
- 11 *Memories of the Afterlife*, op cit, p. 211.