



# The Holographic Soul

*Ian Lawton*

*The modern focus on topics such as the power of now, cosmic ordering, quantum mysticism and cosmic consciousness has led many people towards a spiritual view that places the emphasis on the idea that we are all One. But what of the persuasive evidence that we are also individual, reincarnating souls? How can we bring these two ideas together, and does the key lie with the principle of the hologram? Spiritual philosopher **Ian Lawton** explains his concept of 'the holographic soul'.*

Modern studies repeatedly suggest that a significant proportion of people in the western world now believe in reincarnation. Although this phenomenon can be traced back to various esoteric movements that flourished from the second half of the 19th century, it gained significant ground with the explosion of popular interest in eastern spiritual approaches in the 60s. And it was reinforced by a proliferation of therapists offering to regress people into their past lives.

Yet now the tide seems to be turning again. For some years the emphasis has been moving more towards the idea that we are all part of the One, the All, the Source, the Absolute, the Ultimate, the Great Spirit or whatever we choose to call the 'universal consciousness'. Of course this is not a new idea. But what is changing is that especially more intellectually minded spiritual seekers are tending towards the view that anything outside of the 'One' is mere 'illusion'.

## The One and the Many

In fact this word *illusion* is used a great deal in spiritual circles these days, although in quite different contexts, and it is perhaps worth considering what these are. Of course we would all agree that the physical world itself is to some extent an illusion, at least inasmuch as it is underpinned by the nonphysical planes and states of being that mystics have talked about for eons and that science is increasingly pointing towards. But what about the idea that we only reincarnate for as long as we fail to see through the 'illusion', and that as soon as we gain 'enlightenment' we can 'break the bonds of karma' and 'reunite with Source'? More radical still, what about the idea that any notion of individuality is completely illusory on all levels, and that as soon as we die there is no sense of continuation of any sort of individual soul consciousness?

Whether or not they make it explicitly clear, these latter two are the 'illusion models' supported by a significant proportion of our best-known spiritual commentators of modern times – be they proponents of, for example, the 'power of now', or of 'cosmic ordering', or of 'quantum mysticism'. Yet to see the world in this way is entirely at odds with what we might call the 'experience model', which holds that we lead many lives in order to see all sides of every emotional coin, and to learn to deal with the manifest challenges that life on this planet provides. In other words, a model in which the emphasis is on an individual soul growing by experience over many lifetimes.<sup>1</sup>

## Near-Death Experiences

The idea that 'we are all one' or all 'part of source' is not only a common element of transcendental experiences – whether spontaneous, meditative or induced by hallucinogens – but is increasingly supported by discoveries in theoretical physics and cosmology. So our next step must be to investigate whether, at the same time, there is any real evidence to support the idea of an *individual* consciousness that exists or survives independent of the physical body.

The most relevant area of research here is into near-death experiences.<sup>2</sup> In particular we are interested in cases that involve subjects returning with factual information that is subsequently verified, and yet so obscure that they could not reasonably have acquired it in any 'normal' way. One of the most fascinating cases on record took place in the early 70s, and involves a gifted young Russian scientist called George Rodonaia. His work on chemical brain transmitters was sufficiently valued by the KGB that they were not prepared to lose his expertise to the US by letting him take up an invite to further his research at Yale. On the day of his departure, as he stood on the pavement in Tbilisi waiting for a taxi to the airport, he was deliberately mown down by a car and pronounced dead at the scene. His body lay in a morgue for three days, but as the autopsy began his eyelids flickered and he was rushed to surgery.

As a man of science George had never had any time for religion. So those close to him were bewildered when, three days into his lengthy recovery, he began to describe what had happened while he was 'dead'. In fact his was a relatively non-typical and highly transcendental experience, but for our current purposes he also claimed he had also been able to travel anywhere he liked while 'out of body'. In particular he was drawn to a newborn baby in the hospital adjoining the morgue because she would not stop crying, and doctors had been unable to diagnose the problem. Much to his surprise he found that he was able to communicate with her telepathically, and also to scan her body and establish that her hip had been broken, probably at birth. Incredibly, as soon as George was well enough to pass on this information, the doctors x-rayed the baby and found that she did indeed have a fractured hip.

There are other, similar cases of near-death experiences involving obscure, factual information that combine to strongly suggest that our individual awareness or consciousness does indeed continue to exist even when the

physical brain is absolutely non-functional. So far so good. But is there any evidence to support the further idea that individual souls have *many* lives?

## Reincarnation Cases

Here we encounter two important areas of research, the first involving children who have spontaneous memories of past lives.<sup>3</sup> Although historically most of these cases have come from Asia, one of the finest involves a young American boy called James Leininger of Lafayette, Louisiana. Born in 1998, his fascination with toy planes from the earliest age took a more sinister turn as he approached his second birthday, when vivid nightmares began. He would thrash around in his sleep, kicking out with his legs up in the air and moaning: 'Airplane crash, on fire, little man can't get out.' His mother Andrea had no particular religious convictions but, when her mother suggested these might be memories of a past life, she began to encourage little James to talk about them. And he began to reveal startling details, such as that the pilot of the plane was also called James; that he had been shot down by the Japanese; that he had flown Corsairs; and that one of his fellow pilots went by the name of Jack Larsen. He also mysteriously mentioned the single word *Natoma*.

His father Bruce remained dubious about any sort of spiritual explanation, but he knew that neither he nor any other member of their family had any particular interest in aircraft or the war. So he began to research, and quickly established that an aircraft carrier called the USS *Natoma Bay* had been stationed in the Pacific during World War II and had taken part in the notorious battle for the Japanese island of Iwo Jima early in 1945. He ordered a book about this, and was flicking through it one day when James pointed to the island of Chichi Jima on a map and exclaimed, 'Daddy, that is where my plane was shot down.' He then made contact with the 'Natoma Bay Association', who confirmed that Jack Larsen had been one of the pilots, and also that only one pilot had been lost at Chichi Jima: 21-year-old Lt James M Huston Jr.

Bruce also knew that Huston had flown Wildcats, not Corsairs, on the *Natoma Bay*. But when he made contact with Huston's elderly sister she kindly sent him some photos – including one of her brother standing proudly next to a Corsair. Military records then showed he had originally been part of an elite special squadron who test-flew these planes. But the real clincher involves three 'GI Joe' dolls. When Bruce asked his son why he called them Leon, Walter and Billie he replied, 'Because they greeted me when I went to heaven.' Again military records confirmed that three of Huston's fellow *Natoma Bay* pilots were Lt Leon S Conner, Ensign Walter J Devlin and Ensign Billie R Peeler – and that all three had died *before* Huston on other engagements. None of this detailed information is available on the internet pages about the *Natoma Bay* even now, let alone in popular books and so on.

## Hypnotic Regression

The second area of past-life research is hypnotic regression.<sup>4</sup> With this we must first appreciate that the human brain appears to store a complete record of everything we have ever been exposed to, no matter how briefly or how long ago, and that although most of these memories remain inaccessible to our normal consciousness they can be accessed in trance. So apparently authentic and detailed past lives, even including strong emotions and strange accents and so on, have sometimes been proved to come from

perfectly normal sources – not least historical fiction, which is often overlooked by spiritual researchers. Nevertheless, there remain some cases involving information so obscure that only a paranormal explanation seems appropriate.

One of the most intriguing involves a young woman dubbed Jane Evans, who was one of many subjects regressed by the Welsh hypnotherapist Arnall Bloxham. She first visited him in the late 60s and proved a responsive subject who, over the course of a number of sessions, regressed into six separate lives from Roman times onwards. She would go on to be the star of a 1976 documentary made by the initially sceptical BBC producer Jeffrey Iverson, entitled 'The Bloxham Tapes'. Her most celebrated past life was that of a persecuted Jewess in 12th-century York, but on close investigation this case is somewhat inconclusive. In fact her strongest life in terms of obscure evidence involved Alison, a young servant to the 15th-century French financier and merchant, Jacques Coeur.

Some of the historical information Jane came up with in trance was relatively obscure, and could only be verified by professional French historians. For example, she said that Charles VII's nickname was 'heron legs'; that his son Louis had poisoned his wife; that his mistress Agnes Sorel had two pet dogs clothed in 'coats of white fur with jewelled collars'; and that Coeur was Jewish and his father was a goldsmith.

Perhaps more impressive was her knowledge that Coeur was an avid collector of art, with paintings by Jean 'Fouquet', the court painter to the king and one of Coeur's debtors; by Jan 'van Eyck', the court painter to the nearby Duke of Burgundy; by 'Giotto', an Italian master from the previous century; and by the little-known 'John of Bruges' who, Iverson established only with great difficulty, was also known as John Bondolf and was a Flemish court painter for the king's grandfather. More impressive again was her report that Coeur had a 'body servant' called Abdul, who was 'dressed differently from the others' – because it was only from obscure French court records of the time that Iverson was able to confirm that he did indeed have an Egyptian body slave.

Impressive enough, yet the clincher in this case is Jane's recall of a 'beautiful golden apple with jewels in it' that she said had been given to Coeur by the Sultan of Turkey. All of Iverson's initial attempts to verify the existence of such a piece drew a blank until his last night in Coeur's home town of Bourges, when he returned to his hotel to find a message from a local historian. The latter reported that he had been searching through contemporary archives when he found 'an obscure list of items confiscated by the Treasury from Jacques Coeur'; and in that list was a 'grenade' of gold – a pomegranate. Of course this is so like an apple in shape and size that the English word contains the French root *pomme*. It is also worth noting that one sceptic's supposed attempt to trace all these details to a historical novel is a complete travesty, because the novel has an entirely different plot and contains virtually none of these obscure details.

Again there are other, similar cases of both childhood recall and regression that involve equally obscure yet verifiable information about past lives – although there are plenty of cases that appear strong but on close inspection are not, and we should be ever wary of losing our discernment.<sup>5</sup>

## How Convincing are these Reports?

Have sceptics managed to muster persuasive arguments against the evidence in all these areas of research?<sup>6</sup> As far as the strong cases are concerned, if they have dared to look at them in detail at all – instead of deliberately and selectively commenting on weaker ones – their rebuttals are,

by and large, simplistic and reductionist. Of course their other tack is not to get drawn in and to simply write off the entire body of evidence as 'purely anecdotal'. But anyone who has taken the time to properly acquaint themselves with the strongest cases will know that the only possible materialist explanation against them that might stand up is deliberate fraud, not misinterpretation – and the disparate circumstances and volume of these cases is such that this is *not* the most rational explanation.

On the other hand, could these cases merely result from subjects tapping into some sort of universal memory, or even from possession by the deceased? Probably the strongest evidence that they are indeed memories from the subjects' own, individual, past lives comes from subjects also being regressed into the time *between* lives, or 'interlife'.<sup>7</sup> This stems from the research of a number of pioneering psychologists and psychiatrists around the world, who each stumbled on the interlife independently in the 70s and 80s. Their subjects' reports are extremely consistent, so that the experience can be broken into five main elements: transition and healing, past-life review, soul group interaction, next-life planning and returning. Although in recent decades this experience has gained widespread exposure, the original evidence was collated by pioneers working independently with hundreds of subjects who were highly unlikely to have been merely regurgitating reports they had read about elsewhere.

### The Hologram Model

So how do we properly bring this evidence of individual soul survival and reincarnation together with the idea of a universal consciousness that underlies everything? Although the most profound spiritual sources have hinted at the truth throughout the ages, the most simple yet elegant solution has only become available to us in recent decades with the discovery of the hologram. And it involves applying this principle not to the brain, nor to memory, nor even to the universe as a whole, but instead to soul consciousness itself. So we could put forward the following model and definitions:

*Soul consciousness is holographic. We are both individual aspects of Source, and full holographic representations of it, all at the same time. However this does not mean that soul individuality is in itself an illusion. The principle of the hologram is that the part contains the whole, and yet is clearly distinguishable from it.*

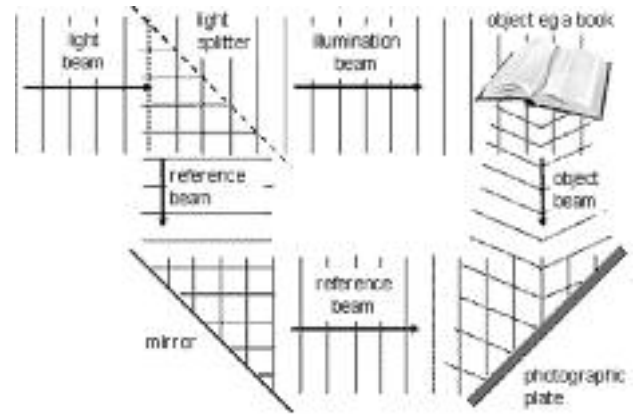
As for the bigger picture, it is probably safe to extend the definition of the holographic soul as follows:

*Source's primary aim, in diversifying into all the billions of holographic soul aspects of itself that operate in the various realms throughout the universe, is to experience all that is and can be. So as individualised aspects of Source who have chosen to reincarnate on this planet, we are merely fulfilling a small part of that objective by gaining a balance of all the experiences available via this route.*

**Ian Lawton** was born in 1959. In his mid-thirties he became a writer-researcher specialising in ancient history, esoterica and spiritual philosophy. His first two books, *Giza: The Truth* (1999) and *Genesis Unveiled* (2003), have sold over 30,000 copies worldwide. In *The Book of the Soul* (2004) he developed the idea of Rational Spirituality, also establishing himself as one of the world's leading authorities on the interlife. And in *The Wisdom of the Soul* (2007) he first introduced the idea of the

*holographic soul. His other books include The Little Book of the Soul* (2007), *The Big Book of the Soul* (2008, a complete rewrite of the 2004 book), *Your Holographic Soul* (2010), *The Future of the Soul* (2010) and *The History of the Soul* (2010, a revision of the 2003 book). He is also a practising current, past and between life regression therapist. For further information see [www.ianlawton.com](http://www.ianlawton.com).

#### Appendix – The Hologram



A basic hologram is created by shining a light beam through a 'splitter' angled at 45°. Some of the light carries straight on through as an 'illumination beam' that lights up all sides of an object, for example a book. An 'object beam' is then reflected off this at a 45° angle onto a 'photographic plate' placed at a similar angle. At the same time the light splitter produces a 'reference beam' that is bounced off a mirror angled at 45°, and then onto the plate, creating an interference pattern. Whenever the plate is subsequently illuminated by the original reference beam, a holographic, three-dimensional image of the original object is created in its original position, even when the object itself is no longer actually there. But the crucial aspect for our purposes is that the photographic plate can be broken into increasingly small fragments, and *each one* will still reproduce the *entire* image – albeit with a slight loss of clarity at the extremes. And this is what is meant by 'the part contains the whole and yet is clearly distinguishable from it'.

#### Notes

1. All these models, and the idea of the holographic soul itself, are discussed in far more detail in *The Big Book of the Soul*, chapter 8. It also contains a detailed biography and source references section.
2. For full details see *ibid.*, chapter 1.
3. For full details see *ibid.*, chapter 2. There is also a section on Ian Stevenson's birthmark and defect cases, which in my opinion are weaker.
4. For full details see *ibid.*, chapter 3.
5. Indeed my own critiques of what I refer to as 'weak' and 'inconclusive' cases are far more detailed than anything sceptics have come up with; see *ibid.*, chapter 3, pp. 72-94.
6. Note that I am always careful to include all of their counter arguments against my strong or 'unexplained' cases in all these areas of research.
7. For full details of the independence and objectivity of the original evidence see *The Big Book of the Soul*, chapter 5, pp. 152-5.