

prefer to substitute the term 'God force' for God. It is I suppose inevitable that in dealing with such questions as the nature of the self, or the purpose of life, there must be a substantial reliance upon metaphor. But I confess that I found few of the metaphors that Beard—or his guides—employ, to be illuminating. The picture of the universe which emerges seems remarkably simplistic; with no real insights into those problems which have exercised philosophers and theologians over the centuries. As J. B. S. Haldane once observed, the truth about the universe is doubtless not only queer, but a good deal queerer than we can even imagine.

I was rather surprised at the emphasis on reincarnation in this book: as Beard himself admits, the very brief accounts which he gives of his own supposed previous incarnations—described clairaudiently by one sensitive—are completely non-evidential. They leave me with the impression of being 'cold-readings' with the addition of a few exotic and/or antiquarian details.

From reincarnation the book moves on to Astrology: and we learn that the present Piscean age, whose exemplar is Jesus, is about to be superseded by the Aquarian age. There is likely to be an Aquarian exemplar, but it seems uncertain whether this will be a man, a woman, or a form of interior illumination. There may be false prophets; and in any case, the two ages may overlap by some hundreds of years. The age may bring achievements from spiritual perceptions, or destruction from rational achievements. This last sounds like a commendation for the irrational.

This book does not offer much of interest to the student of psychical research as a scientific endeavour. There are no opportunities for investigating the identities of the guides: nor of establishing the authenticity of any of the past lives. Beard admits that the acceptance—or rejection—of all or part of the teachings of a guide is a matter for the subjective judgement of the pupil. This would seem to be likely to lead to some form of spiritual isolation, rather than to the participation in a group soul, which Beard particularly commends.

The book is well-produced, and by today's standards is modestly priced.

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To the Editor,

I would like to thank Harley, Matthews and Sargent for responding to the account of my visit to Cambridge. I shall not respond to all their criticisms but do wish to comment on a few points.

They argued that my proposed methods of possible cheating were clumsy and not the best possible. I agree. However, it was these hypotheses which led to my checking things like the removal of envelopes from drawers and the constitution of the main deck. Without these hypotheses the errors would not have come to light. I think it important for anyone trying to judge the ganzfeld database as a whole to know that the errors occurred, how they were found and the weaknesses in the randomisation method they reveal.

Session 9 is quite different. I did not predict this combination of events. There are at least two possible explanations; an opportunistic exploitation of circumstances allowing one person to be present at both randomisation and judging, or a combination of misunderstandings and mistakes. Fortunately readers can now judge for themselves on the basis of the various accounts. Note that officially Sargent took no part in this session. The fact that he both carried out the randomisation and was present at the judging could never be revealed in any post hoc analysis such as is given by Harley and Matthews, and Sargent.

Sargent accuses me of making several errors. I apologise for stating that the rating scale was 1-100 when it was 0-99. Sargent describes an error 'of major importance' (p. 209) in my description of what occurred when the judging set in one session was found to be one picture short but he misquotes me. I did not say that the agent asked for a 'duplicate picture' but an 'extra picture' (p. 191), a slight difference which completely changes the argument. I am sorry if I got the location in the other building wrong.

More importantly, Sargent argues that I suppressed evidence of rejudging session 9, of events in session 7 and of data checking. My report was based closely on my notes made at the time. Although Sargent finds this unbelievable and does not believe it (see p. 211) I did not describe any of these events in my notes. The rejudging is, as Sargent says, briefly described in my 1979 report. I quote 'I asked another person in the lab (D. G.) to judge the pictures against S's protocol. He, narrowly, gave B rank 1 confirming the original choice. However, he was not sure that he had not previously heard talk about this particular session and so further independent judging would be helpful' (Blackmore, 1979 p. 14). I cannot do further judging without access to the pictures and apparently it has not been done.

My notes for session 7 do not include the interesting points Sargent makes about his own bias. They do state that Carl thought D was the target. D got the highest rating but the subject ranked A first and got a direct hit. This conflicts with Sargent's statement that the subject both rated and ranked the correct target first. I do not have access to the original records to check this. As for the data checking, Harley and I did not have the Blue Book (the data records) most of the time. That is why we were looking for it in Sargent's room (and why we found the extra envelopes). When we did finally find it Harley did some informal analyses but I kept no record of them. I had no further access to the records.

If any reader is interested in just what I did or did not include in my notes (and hence may have suppressed), or in when I thought up which hypotheses, I will happily supply them with a photocopy of my handwritten notes. I am glad that readers now have accounts from everyone closely involved.

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REFERENCE

Blackmore, S. J. 1979. Report of a visit to Carl Sargent's Laboratory at the University of Cambridge. Unpublished. Archives of the SPR.