

REINCARNATION DEBUNKED

THE AMAZING TRUTH ABOUT PAST LIFE MEMORIES

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Introduction

People who believe in reincarnation do so mainly because of the following “proofs”:

1. **Past Life Regression (PLR)**, whereby hypnotized subjects are regressed to a time before birth and another life and, sometimes, a life between lives (LBL) as well.
2. **Past Life Memories of Children**, which are generally spontaneous (rather than hypnotically induced) recollections of a past life.
3. **Birthmarks**, that weirdly accompany the cause of death in a previous life.
4. **Xenoglossy**, where a person begins to speak a language they are not familiar with, sometimes even an ancient one no longer even spoken.
5. **Doppelgangers**, or “doubles”, from history.
6. **Child Prodigies** who, it is claimed, could only derive their brilliant abilities from a previous lifetime.
7. **Synchronicity and Coincidence**- the parallels between the lives of two people sometimes separated by centuries.

Proofs Or Misconceptions?

At first glance, these phenomena do indeed seem compelling. And, unsurprisingly, the many books, websites, magazines and TV shows featuring reincarnation nowadays, emphasize these factors. So much so, that the casual observer might well think that there is a watertight case in support of the doctrine of rebirth, and even that it is a natural phenomenon that possibly happens to everybody. But what if there is another, equally intriguing explanation? And what if, although the evidence rules out reincarnation, it nevertheless proves that the soul survives death? I believe that such an explanation exists, and in the following pages I will reveal:

- How, when reincarnation is examined more closely, the doctrine proves to be based upon major misconceptions. What we really need

to ask is, just what is the nature of past life memories, and whose memories are they?

- How Karma, contrary to popular belief, is both unjust and contradictory, and how it has political and historical, rather than divine, origins.
- How both reincarnation and Karma are potentially harmful beliefs that hinder human progress both in this world and the next.
- That there is still an afterlife, only a much more desirable and permanent one.

However, things are not all rosy, and there is still a judgement to be faced, even a Hell for serious offenders. However, you can get out of it again.

As a doctrine, reincarnation has held sway- even been taken for granted- for much too long. It is time for a counter-argument to join a handful of other writers, who have confronted this issue. I hope this present book is a worthy companion.

So come with me on a journey, hopefully, towards the truth and the light...

1. Past Life Memories as Cryptomnesia

Past Life Regression (PLR) is big business these days, and some striking results have been achieved, many of which seem hard to dismiss. But consider the following statement:

*'In my experience, nearly all so-called previous personalities evoked through hypnotism are entirely imaginary and a result of the patient's eagerness to obey the hypnotist's suggestion. It is no secret that we are all highly suggestible under hypnosis.'*¹

The above criticism was written by none other than reincarnationist Professor Ian Stevenson- himself a psychiatrist trained in hypnosis. PLR Subjects often remember such impressive details during sessions, that sometimes the only explanation seems to be that the subject is remembering a past life. However, what would otherwise be claimed as reincarnation illustrates, instead, the human brain's amazing powers of memory and storage of information. This process is known as Cryptomnesia, or Confabulation, and can explain at least some of these strange memories , as the following cases illustrate.

Convincing, But False

The first example of such an evoked personality concerns the case of an English woman named Jan who, under hypnosis, produced an account of a "former life" as Joan Waterhouse, executed as a witch in 16th century England. Jan's account proved to be correct in almost every detail, and was even accompanied with a regional accent punctuated with realistic sounding language and idioms. Her stressed tones throughout the hypnotic regression persuasively suggested that Jan was re-living the suffering visited upon Joan long ago. However, two main factors helped disprove the reality of Jan's "past life" memory.

First, Jan recounted the year of Joan's trial as 1556 and, when asked which monarch was reigning at the time, replied that Elizabeth was queen. Now, the real Joan Waterhouse's trial was in 1566, not 1556.

However, while Elizabeth was, indeed, the monarch in 1566, Joan wouldn't realistically have forgotten that it was, in fact, Mary ("Bloody" Mary) who was on the throne in 1556. So, why the mistake with the trial year? It transpired that the Lambeth Palace chapbook which recorded the trial was mis-copied in the 19th century, recording the year wrongly as 1556. Significantly, authors who based historical dramas on the trial repeated the error and it is highly likely that Jan must have read or seen a play of the trial based on this copy and remembered this wrong date also.

Secondly, additional evidence against the authenticity of Jan's experience materialized when her speech was analyzed by an English expert who specialized in historical regional accents. He dismissed Jan's accent after a short time as a fabricated one based upon popular TV and radio renditions of the period, and that could not be reconciled with how the real 16th century Joan Waterhouse would have spoken. ²

Amazing

The second case features a preacher's daughter named Cynthia, who was regressed back to Richard II's time, and a life as Blanche Poyning. Again, the wealth of detail was enough to impress the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). However, the SPR investigator thought to ask Blanche, via an ouija board, where she got her knowledge. Blanche answered *Countess Maud* by Emily Holt. The book did indeed contain all the details Cynthia, as Blanche, had related. Cynthia had read it when she was twelve but forgotten. Though both this case and the previous one of Joan Waterhouse can be shown to be confabulated, they, nevertheless, provide astounding evidence of the capabilities of the human mind. As Sam Gooch remarked,

'What an absolutely amazing situation...A young child hears a play or reads a story, in all probability once only, yet her unconscious

mind retains all the detailed factual information that the story narrates, without error'³

Fictional

In the third example, however, the errors were far more prominent. Housewife Jane Evans provided details of a previous incarnation as Allison, a maid who reputedly lived in the house of a wealthy French merchant named Jacques Couer in the 15th century.

*'Evans reported that Couer was single with no children. In fact, he was married with five children – something that most maids would notice. Such errors provided the clue to the source of the story, a novel by Thomas B. Costain entitled 'The Moneyman'...'*⁴

Costain, though basing his novel on Couer's life, had omitted the real Couer's wife and children as a literary device. It transpired that Jane had read the novel, but, like Cynthia had forgotten it. And it was this fictional aspect, rather than the historical facts, that Evans had picked up on.

Inaccuracies

Ian Wilson investigated novelist A J Stewart's claim to be a reincarnation of Scottish king, James IV, and had her handwriting, which was supposedly in King James's early 16th c. hand and style, discredited. Also disproved was Stewart's claim that a portrait of James IV, together with his father, James III and St Andrew, by a Flemish master, had originally omitted James IV -who was painted in later- and also that a vine had been painted over. X-rays revealed that there had never been a vine there originally, though there *were* signs of over-painting. And in another portrait claimed to be of James IV, Stewart pointed to the perceived facial resemblance between herself and the Scottish king and also that it had been painted by Holbein the Younger. Again, however, art historians denied that the subject was

James IV, or that it was painted by Holbein, who was too young at the time.

Wilson nevertheless seemed impressed by Stewart's resemblance to James IV through portraits known to have been of him. He also cites the sometimes obscure, in-depth, knowledge of the king revealed in *Marmion*, Sir Walter Scott's poem about James IV. However, A J, who was actually brought up in Lancashire, England, claims never to have read the poem. But, as Wilson asks,

*'Even if she is the reincarnation of James, by what means could the dead king have acquired a knowledge of the poem's contents, when this was not published until more than three hundred years after his death?'*⁵

Later, (in Chapter 5) I will suggest how the knowledge could have been acquired. Intriguingly, Wilson believed it possible that A J suffered from Dissociative Identity Disorder(DID) and that one of her "alters" could have read the poem. Certainly, she had several of the conditions that give rise to its symptoms: personal stress; solitude in her formative years; an inner voice, alien to her; sudden, uncharacteristic, bouts of violence.⁶ These conditions are often present in DID sufferers.⁷

Against this, however, must be set the inaccuracies already cited. And as to physical resemblance, though Stewart was her married name, her maiden name was Kay, which is likewise. Scottish. (she was a redhead, too, like many Scots) so some resemblance to a Scottish king might be unsurprising. Also, a reference by AJ to the *Great Michael* -the largest ship of its day- pounding the Thames requires no great leap of imagination. There is every reason a Scottish king might use the vessel against the English, since the two nations were often at war until they united in 1707. Indeed, James IV himself died fighting the English at Flodden Field in 1513.

"Flashbacks"

It should be mentioned also, that PLR can produce psychological problems, even dangers. For instance, Jan, had disturbing “flashbacks” of being Joan Waterhouse. Again, Ian Stevenson himself warned of such possible outcomes:

‘Hypnotic regression to “previous lives” is not without some dangers. Instances have occurred in which the “previous personality” has not gone away when instructed...and the subject...has been left in an altered state of personality for several days or more.’⁸

However, Stevenson’s above warning, together with the earlier one referring to ‘entirely imaginary’ past lives, might well turn out to be misguided also. For, as we shall see, beginning in Chapter 3, other, independently real entities are almost certainly involved.

The “Past Life” That Never Was

Dr Michael Newton is a popular author on the subject of past lives, since *Journey Of Souls* (1994). Though Newton seldom details actual names of his clients’ past lives, he did refer to a “past life” of one client in some detail, namely, Case 12,

‘A short life as a prosecuting attorney called Ross Feldon in the state of Oklahoma during the 1880s. As Ross, my client had committed suicide at age thirty-three in a hotel room by shooting himself in the head. Ross was in despair over the direction his life had taken as a courtroom prosecutor...’⁹

To begin with, the premise of this case doesn’t sound very convincing. I would imagine a prosecutor in those lawless Wild West times would be truly inundated with clients, and business booming so much that the only complaint would have been that of overwork! But, to proceed, Oklahoma did not become a state until 1907, so Newton’s

client, especially recalling this past life as a lawyer, should have known this. But there was worse to come, when a genealogy researcher investigated. This researcher tells how they undertook an intense search for Feldon, regarding Newton's description as sufficient information to go on. The target was therefore (most probably) a white male, born 1845-1865, died 1875-1900 and the search was for *anyone* with the surname Feldon or variants such as Felton or Fulton. Feldon didn't show up in federal court records and databases, registries, or censuses for Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas or Arkansas.- the ultimate "man who never was". Our researcher concluded,

'The most damning lack of evidence... is the absence of any newspaper articles detailing the suicide of this man... In the small towns of the Indian/Oklahoma Territory, the suicide of a prosecuting attorney in a hotel room would be very big news... There is no mention of Feldon as a working attorney in any of those columns'.¹⁰

In case it may be thought that this genealogist set out to debunk Newton, this is highly unlikely. In fact, somewhat the reverse, since their post on a reincarnation forum carried the header '*I want to believe*'. Thus, for what would surely have been for our researcher, a splendid confirmation of their beliefs, it ended disappointingly, and you have to admire their honesty in admitting they drew a blank.

I think it only fair to point out that this case need not suggest deliberate fraud on Newton's part. Rather, it has all the hallmarks of the cryptomnesia / confabulation seen earlier, rather than the cases in which details which can be verified. These, as we shall see throughout this book, are very different. However, whether this other type of case indicates a subject's past life, is another matter entirely.

NOTES

1. *Omni Magazine* 10(4):76, 1988
2. Wilson, Ian *Mind Out Of Time?* p.204. Victor Golancz. London (1981)
3. Gooch, Stan *The Origins Of Psychic Phenomena*, p.80. Inner Traditions, Rochester Vt.(1984).
4. *Evidence For Reincarnation DEBUNKED*
5. Wilson, Ian *Mind Out Of Time?* p. 240. Victor Golancz. London (1981).
6. *ibid* p 238
- 7.(see, for example) Martinez, Susan B. *Field Guide To The Spirit World*, pp.267-272. Bear And Company. Rochester, Vt. (2019).
- 8.Stevenson, Ian ‘Hypnotic Regression To Previous Lives- A Short Statement’
9. Newton Michael *Journey Of Souls*, p.57. Llewellyn. St Paul, Mn (1994).
- 10.[reddit.com/reincarnation/wanttobelieve/comments/genealogical_research_provedisprove_derails](https://www.reddit.com/reincarnation/wanttobelieve/comments/genealogical_research_provedisprove_derails)

2. Anomalies

Major inconsistencies weaken the case for reincarnation, which many people are unaware of, such as the following:

Birth/Death Mismatches

There are cases where the new incarnation was born *before* the “past life” died. In one case, a Buddhist monk, Chaokhun Rajsuthajarn, was born a day before the death of Nai Leng, the personality he claimed to have been in his previous life. Ian Stevenson admitted ‘*I studied this case with much care but couldn't find an explanation for the discrepancy.*’¹

But more remarkably still- in a Stevenson case from the early 1950s- an Indian boy named Jasbir Jat was born *three and a half years* before his previous incarnation, Sobha Ram, died. In short, this means that

*‘Since Sobha Ram died when Jasbir was already three and a half years old, his “past-life recall” obviously cannot be a proof of reincarnation... For the previous 3.5 years both persons lived physically in nearby villages.’*²

Shared Past Lives

Dr Melvin Morse cites a case where two American boys, thousands of miles apart, shared the same “past life”. Morse suggests

*‘A “memory bank” not unlike the “collective unconscious” or the “akashic records” which both boys somehow tuned into, since it cannot be down to “past lives” in the accepted sense.’*³

And in another “shared” past life, this time among the Druze of Lebanon (an unorthodox sect of Islam who believe in reincarnation)

two boys both claimed to be Melhem Mlaheb reincarnated. Miaheb apparently died in a war zone, when a shell hit his bulldozer.⁴

In this latter case, however, the boss of the factory said that he had worked there over 20 years and never encountered anyone by that name. That left the second boy to be investigated. Unfortunately, he got the name of his wife in the past life wrong: it was Amira, not Bassima.⁵ Quite an error and hardly a pointer towards reincarnation.

Could It All “Resonate”?

The notion of “Morphic Resonance”, or “formative causation” as first postulated by Dr Rupert Sheldrake may indeed explain such discrepancies, and might not be so far-fetched. Animals can seem telepathic, from flocks of birds in synchronized flying, to termites building identical mounds to other termites. Pet owners, particularly, may witness such things. For example, cats, like mine, who seem to know when they are going to the vet’s and suddenly hide for no other apparent reason. (In case it is claimed that the cat has “read” my intentions by my demeanor, this happens when I am well out of her sight also.) My late wife’s family’s dog, over eighty miles way, used to wag his tail and go the window without any prompting on the very morning she was planning a visit! Thus, in such shared “past lives”,

‘A person may for some reason tune in by morphic resonance to a particular person who lived in the past. This could account for the transfer of memories without having to suppose that the present person is the past person...Just as last night’s television movie is not “in” the TV circuitry, the memory of a seeming previous life is not in the percipient.’⁶

Even crop circles may be related to this phenomenon. Indeed, it is study group founder Leonie Starr’s belief that

‘The patterns are a manifestation of collective human thought and however crazy you may believe this hypothesis to be, there is no

*denying that it is certainly one possibility, given what we know about the very strange nature of reality.'*⁷

However, while morphic resonance is a feasible explanation of such shared past lives, it may be stretching things to explain the other anomaly, whereby a “past” and present life are alive at exactly the same time (although I will return to this possibility in Chapter 26) However, there is another explanation which can accommodate both these sorts of anomaly, and to which we may now turn.

NOTES

1. Omni Magazine 10(4):76 (1988)
2. *comparativereligion.org*
3. Morse, Melvin *Where God Lives* HarperOne (2000).
4. Webster, James *The Case Against Reincarnation*. Grosvenor House. Kindle edition (2012)
5. *ibid.*
6. To The Ends Of The Earth UK TV Channel 4 (5/18/1998).
7. Hamer, John. *The Falsification of History: Our Distorted Reality*, p. 581. Rossendale Books. (2012).

3. “Past Lives” As Spirit Obsession

We have seen how cryptomnesia can explain a large portion of what are thought to be “past lives”. However, some cases claimed to be of reincarnation are not so easy to dismiss in this way. Cases involving children seem especially difficult to explain away, mainly because some are very young when the memories begin, so naturally they’ve had neither the present life experiences nor abilities such as reading or watching TV or movies, to be able to confabulate events. It is assumed, therefore, that the only possible explanation for such memories is reincarnation. Indeed, this notion was central to the work of Ian Stevenson and his successors. But on the other hand, how can the idea of past lives be reconciled with children living for years at the exact same time as their “past life” or sharing one ?

Evidence From A Century Ago

An answer to this question has been available for nearly a hundred years. In his book *Thirty Years Among The Dead (1924)*, Professor Carl Wickland, a psychiatrist, told of how he cured mentally ill patients, who had been dismissed as “hopeless” cases. Breaking with the materialistic psychiatric model of his day which had failed these unfortunate people, Wickland discovered that the patients were, in fact, being tormented by spirits! What has this to do with past lives? Well, Wickland found there were several categories of such spirits. Though all were earthbound, they were not usually malevolent. Most were just lost and confused, attracted by the magnetic aura around the living - a process which Wickland called “obsession”. Others, however, were the spirits of those who had believed in reincarnation. And crucially, these spirits had been deliberately attempting to reincarnate in young children. Worse still, the spirits could not escape again.

“Past Lives” Can Be Exorcized!

Together with his wife Anna, a fine physical medium, Wickland devised an ingenious method of freeing both his patients and these unwanted spirits. This task was accomplished by means of an early,

mild, form of Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT) together with a secular form of exorcism. Carl would first feed a small electric charge into the patient. This charge would literally “shock” the offending spirit out of the patient’s body. Next, Anna would go into a trance, allowing the ejected spirit to temporarily control her own body (hence, the term “physical” medium). Invariably, after interrogation by Carl as to its identity, together with a stern lecture, the spirit was persuaded to move on and leave the patient for good. Helping with this process was a group of friendly spirits known as the ‘Mercy Band’ who then guided the expelled spirits toward the higher realms of the afterlife.

The above examples illustrate how, without understanding how spirits obsess the living, events would otherwise have been thought of as “past life” memories. For example, Jack T had been normal until age five when he began to display an uncontrollable temper, complaining that he was ‘ugly’. When removed, the troublesome spirit was identified as Charlie Herrman, whose face had been severely pock-marked- which explained Jack T’s new found self-image of being ugly. Charlie had been told he could reincarnate after death and evidently had acted on this advice. However he had become trapped in Jack T’s magnetic aura and ‘felt like flying to pieces’ in frustration, which in turn helped explain Jack T’s temper. In another case, a spirit of a Theosophist, William Stanley, was likewise ensnared. To Wickland, this situation underlined the dangers of belief in reincarnation, namely that

‘Spirits...endeavoring to "reincarnate" in children, have found themselves imprisoned in the magnetic aura, causing great suffering to both their victims and themselves.’¹

Wickland’s methods could also explain why mentally ill patients who receive Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT) even today, sometimes emerge fully recovered. Could obsessing entities still be similarly shocked out by the treatment?

The Aura Exists To Repel Invaders

These cases recorded by Wickland illustrate the following:

1. That what is cited as evidence of reincarnation is actually the work of spirits transferring their own thoughts and memories, by psychic means, to their victims.
2. That reincarnation is not a “natural” process, but an extremely *unnatural* one. Indeed, the magnetic aura that surrounds a living body helps protect it against such invasion or obsession by spirits.
3. That the spirit attempting to reincarnate is earthbound, whereas the natural process is for any spirit to move on to the next plane of existence. Such a spirit is merely demonstrating its dependence upon the earth plane for what it believes to be the afterlife, in much the same way as addicts and alcoholics have been seen by psychic sensitives hanging around junkies and bars in order to re-experience their addictions through the living.
4. The dangers of believing in reincarnation. When the aura is breached, the result can be dire, both for the spirit trying to reincarnate and for its young victim. Moreover, if these spirits had truly been able to reincarnate, then the Wicklands would not have been able to eject them fairly easily. Reincarnation believers frequently assume themselves to be living a new earth life. Sadly, however, the victim of their delusion is most often a child.

The Child Returns To Normal

More proof that reincarnation has not taken place is illustrated by the pronounced changes in the victim once the obsessing spirit is released. Some of the phenomena are well known in the history of Spiritualism, whereby a communicating spirit will temporarily use the vocal chords of the medium, so creating a remarkable change in voice

and, often, in facial features also. The experience of witnessing a child undergoing such a transformation is even more dramatic, even frightening. Happily, the Wicklands' intervention reversed this process.

Thus, Jack T and the other child reverted almost immediately to their normal, much happier personalities once the spirits of Charlie Herrman and William Stanley, who were causing the severe mental problems, were extracted from the children's magnetic aura. This change was also evident in Jasbir Jat's case. Sobha had been a Brahmin and Jasbir was of the lower Jat caste. However, Jasbir eventually married a Jat girl, which would otherwise have been unthinkable for a Brahmin.

The Child Forgets The "Past Life"

By the time he reached the age of nine,

*'Jasbir's images of this period had become confused and he made several statements contradictory with other evidence.'*²

In fact, this forgetting is a prominent feature of children's past life memories. As Gooch observed,

*'After the age of six or so the child ceases to have them, indeed loses all interest in them, and typically as an adult has no memory of his previous memories at all!'*³

This age is fairly consistent, as Ian Stevenson himself confirmed,

*'The children nearly always stop talking about their previous lives between the ages of five and eight.'*⁴

Indeed, this factor figures in one of Stevenson's major cases- that of the English Pollock twins:

*'Not long after the twins' fifth birthday, the incidents ceased as mysteriously as they had begun.'*⁵

But Whose Memories Are They?

But why should a child forget at this consistent age? The answer may be that, because it has not yet fully formed an identity, a child doesn't comprehend that the thoughts and memories it has are not its own, but that of an earthbound spirit which is obsessing it. Likewise, a young child must wait until it develops enough of the power of speech to be able to communicate, even though an obsessing spirit- in attempting to reincarnate- most likely will have been with the child since the beginning of its life. This was the case with William Stanley's spirit, who said he felt trapped in the child's body, unable to walk or talk: a truly horrible predicament.

Importantly, the child announces its new identity in the *first person*, as if it suddenly identifies with the spirit obsessing it. This factor is the basis of the child's parents and researchers believing it is the child's own past life it is remembering. This transformation in the child is a dramatic one. Up until then, psychologically, the child has been simply what it is, a child: the same innocent entity recognized even in the 3rd century CE by Tertullian, who asked,

*'If souls depart at different ages of human life, how is it that they come back again at one uniform age? For all men are imbued with an infant soul at their birth. But how happens it that a man who dies in old age returns to life as an infant?'*⁶.

For Tertullian, the absence in humans (and animals) who act like mature adults was evidence against the doctrine of rebirth. Babies have babies' egos and not adults', and do not generally behave as if they owned souls that lived before the birth of their bodies. That is, until the child suddenly switches into an adult mind-set and that innocence is compromised by another personality intruding upon it.

“Imaginary” Or Just Invisible?

Another point that needs to be stressed is that a young child is very psychic, living in the so-called *theta* brain state between reality and fantasy. For example, Gooch cites how a mother (herself a social psychologist) was watching her small daughter play “weddings” with

dolls. Purely by coincidence (or maybe not), the mother was thinking of going to see a movie called *Blood Wedding*, when her daughter suddenly announced, ‘*This isn’t a church wedding, it’s a blood wedding*’.⁷ As Gooch remarked, ‘*These children are behaving very much like mediums*’.⁸

As it grows, however, the child’s own personality, together with its will, strengthen, and it is therefore better able to resist any obsessing spirit. In this light, it is possible to look again at the “imaginary playmates” which many children communicate with, and to see some of these as not imaginary at all, but, rather spirits. Some of these might indeed be friendly, possibly the spirits of children who have themselves passed over. But some may be otherwise, obsessing ones. Child psychiatrist Dr Shakuntala Modi confirms this latter possibility:

*‘In psychiatry, we consider it to be a product of the young child’s imagination. But I have patients who reported their childhood playmates as being possessing earthbound entities in them. These entities often claimed they liked playing with my patients when they were young and then went in the bodies at some point when the patients were sick or upset or after they had had surgery.’*⁹

These entities had thus attached themselves to the child’s magnetic aura via a temporary gap in the child’s defense, which illness can induce, effectively hijacking the youngster. As we saw in Jasbir Jat’s case, the boy’s near fatal smallpox would have rendered his body highly vulnerable to the restless spirit of Sobha Ram.

Confused

In his study among the Druze population in Israel, Morwan Dwairy stresses the muddled and fragmentary nature of the memories that an abrupt past-life death can engender in the person claiming to be reincarnated. For example,

‘Z was able to recognize his past-life father but not his past-life mother, despite the fact that they live 20 meters across the street. E was not able to recall his occupation and K was able to recognize

*only his past-life parents, and not his past-life siblings. Q was able to recognize only two of his past-life siblings.'*¹⁰

Dwairy also discovered what is another common feature of a child's "past life" memories: the seemingly restrictive access only to those memories which pertain to the latter part of the past life closest to its death:

*'To many of the questions...concerning childhood, school, adolescence, and adulthood, they answered that they did not remember...all the subjects... gave general, vague answers with no substantial details and none of the emotional experiences that people usually remember about their lives.'*¹¹

Again, these curious omissions cast serious doubt upon the idea of reincarnation. Why should past life memories be limited this way, rather than much more panoramic and graphic? On the other hand, the idea of a child falling prey to a lost soul, and becoming confused by the intermittent broadcast of thoughts essentially foreign to it, would offer a much more realistic overview of what is really happening. Later on, another reason for these lapses may well be that as it grows older, the child's own identity strengthens and it is more able to resist the offending spirit.

Precocious

When Jasbir Jat recovered from smallpox, there were noticeable changes in him. It was not only that he had access to Sobha Ram's memories, he also proclaimed himself a member of the higher, Brahmin caste, even demanding that his food be cooked in the Brahmin manner. Unsurprisingly, this precocious attitude, together with the memories, is frequently offered as proof of reincarnation. For example, in a well-known Stevenson case, some Burmese children adopted the characters of dead Japanese soldiers, complete with a taste for sushi and Japanese clothing. Worse still, the children exhibited a cruelty and hardness formerly unknown. However, the

“past life” interpretation seems deeply unsatisfactory, for these are the hallmarks of obsession, especially when involving what would be such a mass “re-embodiment”. As Marty Spiller asks,

‘Why would an entire cluster of Japanese soldiers, killed in Burma during the Second World War, reincarnate in Burmese children born after the Japanese occupation had ended, as opposed to reincarnating in their native Japan, or virtually any other place in the world? It seems more likely that they were simply “hanging around” the place they died waiting for a chance to “reincarnate”.’¹²

We saw already how Jack T’s rage and self-image reflected accurately those of the mature Charlie Herrman. In Wickland’s words, Herrman was

‘Causing the latter to act as an adult, entirely foreign to his normal self. A spirit entity was attracted from the boy, after which he fully regained his mental poise.’¹³

Mistaken Identity?

It may be asked, if spirit obsession/possession is the explanation for past life memories, then wouldn't we have more possession cases where spirits take over mediums, resulting in the medium believing they lived before as that spirit? Surely, in possession cases, spirits seem clear that they are dead and distinct from the obsessed person? Thus, spirits die, hang around (sometimes for decades) and then possess young children, causing complete identity confusion in imagining they lived the spirit's previous life?

Yes, certainly. Imagine the following. One moment you are a spirit attached to a child’s magnetic aura, very probably believing you are reincarnated as that child. The next moment, you are shocked rudely out of the child’s aura and are impelled to possess a medium instead. One moment you were in full control of the vessel you were obsessing, now you, in turn, are under the control of a medium. This is why the Wicklands’ methods were so

important. Anna, as a mature adult medium -both clairvoyant and clairaudient- knew exactly what these spirits were, that they were totally separate from the child and from her own psyche, and was skilled enough to control them.

Also, such full-blown physical possession involves changes in voice, demeanor, gender and physical characteristics. For Anna, a “past life” of her own was never part of the equation. Otherwise, as she hosted literally hundreds of such spirits in her body, speaking through her own vocal chords, she would have needed to have undergone this number of past lives! Carl Wickland clearly recognized this position:

‘That such "personalities" are independent entities could easily be proven...by transference of the same to a psychic intermediary...it is manifestly impossible that Mrs. Wickland should have a thousand personalities...since it is so readily possible to cause transference of psychosis from a supposedly insane person to Mrs. Wickland, relieving the victim, and in this way discovering that the disturbance was due to a discarnate entity, whose identity can often be verified.’¹⁴

Tragically, most such cases involving children nowadays are interpreted as being the child’s own previous incarnation. Most modern researchers do not even attempt to “exorcise” these lost spirits because their world-view does not allow for it. Contrast this with those children helped by the Wicklands. When the spirits who believed in reincarnation had been ejected, this allowed the obsessed child to fully recover and the lost spirit to move on. The spirit was now fully aware of its own identity and who it was not: not the child and definitely not the medium. Lastly, the reincarnation believer is indeed far more likely to remain earthbound- “hanging around” being a very accurate way to describe it.

The Flip Side

Lastly, there is also another, opposite, factor, which challenges the reincarnation theory. This is when more mature people suddenly begin remembering “past lives”. As we shall see in Chapter 17, an Indian woman in her early thirties, named Uttara, began speaking a two hundred year old version of Bengali, and identified with a woman named Sharada. And in Dwairy’s study, a Druze subject named Q was the ripe old age of 46 when he “remembered” dying at age 32 of a terminal illness in his “previous” life.

We have to ask just why these memories had been suppressed for so long, rather than manifesting in early childhood, when the past life memories would be so much stronger and more vivid. Moreover, these memories were initially spontaneous and did not involve hypno-regression. Note also that these mature people lived in cultures which readily accept reincarnation as a fact. But even when the memories involve PLT, among Westerners, the same question should be asked as to why these memories are so deeply buried as to wait for regression to uncover them, especially as so many of these memories are of dramatic, often violent, past life deaths. Again, there is an answer, which I will suggest in Chapter 8.

NOTES

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4. “Walk-Ins” and “Shared Souls” Debunked

Walk-In Or Cop Out?

It has been suggested that Jasbir Jat’s case, cited in Chapter 2 as an anomaly, is an example of a “walk-in” -a process *‘Where one soul gives up a body so that another soul can take it over.’*¹

Although the term might suggest a temporary condition, the arrangement is, in fact, considered to be permanent. Thus, Jasbir had vacated his body *totally* to Sobha Ram. Jasbir (who was now Sobha) told Ian Stevenson that a ‘holy man’ (sadhu) in the spirit world told Sobha to “take cover” in Jasbir’s body. Dr Walter Semkiw speculates that this sadhu could even have brought Jasbir back to life!² (Jasbir almost died from smallpox, but was not actually pronounced dead). This is a mammoth claim. However, to give it due respect, let us see if there are any precedents either today or in the past for such a likelihood. Now, I found two processes in Hindu literature regarding such a God-like feat as that suggested by Semkiw. In the first process,

*‘Hindu scriptures allude to the lost science of reviving the dead with mystic healing called the Sanjivani Vidya... certain medicinal substances, plants, roots, herbs and even entire trees have the power to restore life in a body after the soul has departed from it... one may acquire the spiritual power to resurrect the dead by gaining occult powers through the practice of certain secret rituals and methods of mysticism (tapah), Yoga and Tantra.’*³

Note, however, the reference to Sanjivani Vidya being a ‘lost science’ and merely ‘alluded’ to. Thus, no-one living in modern times has ever witnessed this phenomenon. Occult ‘secret rituals’ are also a requirement. Such abilities appear considerably beyond those of a simple holy man carving out an austere existence. Moreover, the practitioner is required to be living in the physical world in order to even acquire the necessary ingredients for such a ritual. In the second process,

*'The Tantras allude to the magical power of the awakened Siddhas to revive dead bodies by entering them with the help of certain rituals and chants or summoning other souls to do the same. It was called parakaya pravesam (entering the body of another person). Its purpose, to participate in the play of God and become indifferent to life and death.'*⁴

This second process might look more promising for Semkiw's scenario of a spirit holy man resurrecting a little boy's lifeless body, even though it is still only 'alluded to' by the scriptures. However, the reference to 'the awakened siddhas...summoning other souls...' might indeed make feasible the idea of a holy man summoning Sobha to take over Jasbir's body and, hey presto, reanimation.

Why No Claim To Fame?

That said, the power of resurrecting the dead is surely the ultimate 'play of God' and is associated in the West only with Christ and his disciples. Now, there are estimated to be eleven million sadhus, or holy men (and women) in India nowadays. So even if we go back to 1954 when Sobha Ram died, there should have been around half that number, in accordance with the population of India at that time. Let's round it down to 5 million. So, if these powers are genuine, India should have been positively teeming with resurrectionists, and people would have been literally flocking to the cave openings of such holy men and women, to have their terminally ill brethren rescued from death (especially young children at a time when smallpox and polio were still rife).

Jasbir Jat would have been only one among millions of people resurrected from the dead. And not only inside India, but from outside, with sadhus' fame spreading far and wide and the whole countryside full of shrines: Lourdes would positively pale in comparison! Moreover, such knowledge would almost certainly be handed down to other sadhus in a sacred tradition. Yet, even among legendary advanced sadhus, like Sunder Singh, who are supposed to

have mastered death, the longevity they are reputed to have attained is for *themselves* only and not on behalf of other people.⁵

Such problems make it most unlikely that Jasbir died and was re-animated. Surely it is more realistic to accept that the boy recovered from his terrible malady -against the odds, perhaps, but nevertheless naturally. There are well-documented cases of people reviving even after being pronounced dead by doctors, sometimes in the morgue. For example, in Port Jefferson, Long Island, N Y. An elderly woman revived in a morgue, days after being pronounced dead.⁶ And a Russian woman, Lyudmila Steblitskeya, “died” *twice* for several hours!⁷ Jasbir Jat, in contrast, was never certified dead by a doctor. And as we shall see, in Chapter 19, there is also a precedent for a small child to revive after actually being certified dead by a doctor: the case of Omm Sety.

Still *Two* Spirits Involved

What is much more likely is that, upon revival, Jasbir became overshadowed by the spirit of Sobha Ram. Sobha, in turn, was marooned close to the earth plane, owing to the shock and suddenness of his death (he was poisoned at a wedding). This, together with his cultural belief in reincarnation, meant that he was attempting to reincarnate in Jasbir’s body. And, crucially, the “walk-in” hypothesis admits to there being *two* spirits-Jasbir’s and Sobha’s- involved, rather than the *one* spirit animating successive bodies that normal reincarnation theory proposes.

Another point is that the astral scenario referred to by Stevenson would appear to deviate strongly from Dr Michael Newton’s conclusions in *Journey Of Souls*, regarding the life between lives (LBL) (see Chapter 11). Thus, one might ask, why did Sobha’s Ram’s spirit not speak of this interim afterworld? If the “walk-in” hypothesis is the correct one, he might even have caught up with Jasbir’s spirit there. And what of the holy man? Why was he hanging around the astral regions, advising Sobha what action to take? Are we to believe

that, after a lifetime of ascetic self-denial, he was then denied the ultimate reward of salvation? What was the point of it all? It seems that, rather than being imbued with God-like powers of resurrection, the sadhu himself seems to have been stranded in this “twilight zone”, Was this because his belief in reincarnation was more powerful than his efforts to overcome the world?

Beyond Even The Greatest Guru!

To help answer such questions, consider the most famous holy men in India over the last half century together with their alleged powers. Probably India’s most famous was (Satya) Sai Baba. This guru had millions of followers world-wide and was famed for conjuring jewels and divine ash from thin air. However, sleight of hand was strongly suspected by some critics, who pointed to suspicious-looking video coverage of such materializations.⁸ On the other hand, it is claimed that Sai Baba has been seen producing objects, known as apports, upon request, including an out of season fig.⁹ Such a feature would therefore rule out foreknowledge, in order to conceal objects beforehand, unless of course he had collaborators in the audience. Nevertheless, we will assume he did not.

Against this, however, Baba has refused to be tested scientifically under controlled conditions, apparently for ‘*spiritual reasons*.’¹⁰ But why then is it considered “spiritual” to produce jewels? More importantly, while gems and holy dust and even unseasonal fruit might be extremely impressive, they are hardly on a par with bringing someone back from the dead. Indeed, such a power would surely be invoked for two main reasons. Firstly, to enhance Baba’s reputation and thus spread his spiritual message (after all, even Jesus did not balk at this). And secondly as a moral obligation. For, what greater ‘spiritual reason’ can there be than returning a child to its parents? That Sai Baba never performed this miracle is attested to by one of his own devotees, Dr Erlendur Haraldsson’s in his book *Modern Miracles*. Haraldsson’s book

'Still leads people strongly to draw conclusions as to the genuineness of all Sai Baba's reported miracles (except resurrection and bi-location, which he did investigate and thereby in effect denounce as fraud).''¹¹

But even if it could be proved that Sai Baba, a guru, *did* resurrect someone from the dead, this still would not be evidence that a sadhu, or ordinary holy man, was capable of such a miracle. It is interesting, too, that Stevenson relied upon a “walk-in” to explain the Jasbir Jat case, yet seemed baffled by the case of the monk, Chaokhun Rajsuthajarn, also described earlier (Chapter 2). There *is* a connection he might of thought of, namely that, in both cases, these walk-ins involved holy men, hence possibly the miraculous. However, again, we would still be left with the same problem of why only one monk -the deceased monk, Nai Leng- possessed this extraordinary ability. Remember, too, that Jesus’s alleged miracles- especially raising the dead- began a major world religion, while neither Nai Leng nor the holy man in Jasbir’s case even started a cult.

A Swami Can’t Resurrect Either

The other celebrated example of a modern-day holy man is Prahlad Jani, an elderly Swami from Gujarat whom it was claimed had taken neither food nor water for over 70 years. Jani had impressed Dr. Sakir Shah, director of neuroscience at Sterling Hospital in Ahmedabad, at whose faculty the old swami was closely monitored on two separate occasions. Dr Shah found no evidence of the swami eating or drinking. However, investigators who toured the Swami’s “cave”(actually a comfortable apartment) discovered a working refrigerator-hardly a device needed by a man who needed neither food nor drink- especially when one of Swami’s minders refused to let the team look inside it.¹²

However, marvelous as such abstinence would be, if true, it is still not in the same league as raising the dead. Besides, the Swami’s is not a unique ability, since Therese Neumann was also renowned for the

ability to abstain from food or drink (inedia) for indefinite periods of time. However, This nun, fabled though she is for this amazing abstinence, as well as her stigmata and speaking ancient languages, is nevertheless nowhere listed as capable of resurrection.

Busted!

Yet, India has its share of skeptics as well as holy men. For example, Sanal Edamaruku of the Indian Rationalists' Association. had a confrontation on live TV with a Swami who claimed he could kill him just by uttering mantras. Four hours later, Edamaruku was still alive and smiling. And the Science and Rationalists' Association of India [SRAI] travel India exposing fakirs, godmen, and godwomen. The group uses science to unmask the magical deception used by Hindu mystics in divination, levitation, and other “miracles”. In fact, in an example of spiritual whistle-blowing

*'In Varanasi, one of India's holiest cities and home to the sacred Ganges River, a sadhu named Ladu Baba brushed off the seemingly holy magic tricks and said that any miracle you can see is an illusion.'*¹³

And this from a sadhu, just like the one Sobha Ram encountered on the astral planes. It has to be said, too, that if Sai Baba or Prahlad Jani or, indeed, any other guru or holy man could resurrect the dead, then this would actually be relatively easy to prove. You simply get a recently deceased corpse, get some objective observers-believers and skeptics alike- and undertake the resurrection process. This would not even have to be performed in public, but imagine the TV ratings if the ritual was performed (pardon the expression) “live”! As long as you have some kind of trustworthy witnesses, such a demonstration would be truly earth-shattering. Then you could really silence the critics, such as

'India's leading guru-buster, Basava Premanand... the scourge of all miracle-makers...the founder of the Federation of Indian Rationalist

Associations and the editor of a monthly periodical called The Indian Sceptic. He believes that it is his duty to dispel the "curse of gullibility blighting his country in the form of myth and superstition", and replace it instead with the "gospel of pure, scientific understanding" ¹⁴

I'm sure that raising a cold dead body back to life would silence even the likes of Premanand. This is assuming, of course, that there are no 'spiritual reasons' for undertaking the venture. Obviously, I wouldn't get Ladu Baba to attempt the deed!

'Jasbir Never Died'!

We saw already how a child invariably forgets the past life it was supposed to have been, and Jasbir was no exception. For the reincarnation case, this makes little sense, because if Jasbir was now Sobha, why did he not retain the memories of his previous life indefinitely? There is also the question of what happened to Jasbir's own spirit if Sobha replaced him. And, tellingly, Stevenson could find no trace of him in his "next" life, admitting

*'I have...inquired in the area where he lives about the existence of a child who has claimed within a previous life that he was one Jasbir of village Rasalpur who died of smallpox at the age of about three, but I have never found any trace of such a child.'*¹⁵

As Stephen Blake comments dryly, '*Hardly surprising, since Jasbir never died.*'¹⁶

And, to repeat, Jasbir married a Jat girl. But if Jasbir was a "walk-in", then he was, in actual fact, Sobha Ram, now permanently occupying Jasbir's body. It cannot be over-emphasized that Sobha, as a member of the highest (Brahmin) caste, would not conceivably have married such a lower caste girl.

‘Torture’

The Wicklands’ cases provide further problems, for they are hardly what could be called “walk-ins”. On the contrary, these spirits had been hopelessly trapped and had to be carefully ejected by a pair of skilled practitioners, as Anna and Carl Wickland proved to be. Also, these spirits were obsessing the original spirit of the body they were in, once more proving that there were always *two* spirits involved. These facts seriously question the “past life” theory. Finally, those spirits who attempted to reincarnate in children were seemingly ignorant of any life between life (LBL) realm. Like Sobha Ram, they had been hanging around close to the earth planes rather than ascending to a higher plane, which is, indeed, what the Wicklands attempted to counteract in their work.

Thus, it was the very belief in reincarnation which was causing spirits to become tethered to the earth, in stark contrast to the ascent to spiritual progress they might otherwise have enjoyed. Of course, such a situation would truly have needed countless “walk-ins”, as the vast majority of the spirits had been contemporaries of the Wicklands! One has to wonder how Jasbir Jat would have turned out had the Wicklands been able to treat him, rather than the superstitious and indoctrinated locals he lived among- a situation later to be encouraged by the misguided Ian Stevenson.

Soul Split ? Why Even Masters Can’t Achieve That!

It’s been suggested that a shared past life is an example of a “soul-split”, i.e. that one soul can incarnate simultaneously in two different persons. Thus,

*‘When a soul splits into two, each part can incarnate into a different person, different life, at the same time. Neither person will ever meet the other in their lifetimes until they merge back to their whole soul in the afterlife.’*¹⁷

Stephen Blake devotes a whole section of his book *Reincarnation Refuted* ((2014)) to the phenomenon of “bi-location”, a process by which yogis and saints have appeared in two places at once in front of witnesses. The ability involves the physical body in conjunction with the spiritual body, and it is the latter which travels at the speed of thought to its intended destination. For example, St. Anthony of Padua had been preaching in the Church of St. Pierre du Queyroix at Limoges in 1226, when he was sighted at a monastery in another part of the town. Swami Pranabananda was likewise reported to have passed on a message almost instantaneously to a recipient a half hour’s walk from his home in Benares.

Snag

However, there’s a snag. In each case, the saint and the yogi were only able to focus their consciousness in *one* body – the physical or the spiritual- at one time. While the spirit body was traveling, the physical was in a trance,¹⁸ a situation repeated in all known cases, including mediumistic workings. It seems obvious, therefore, that the description of a “soul split” above is fiercely at odds with the actual reports. Are we seriously to believe that two pairs of young boys can achieve what even saints, yogis and experienced mediums cannot?

I am also disinclined to accept Melvin Morse’s “memory bank” theory. Though feasible, I think it is somewhat surplus to requirements. Rather, I think the spirit explanation remains the best answer, i.e. that in each case, the same spirit obsessed both boys. Additionally, the case of the two Druze boys would refute the concept of a split soul as outlined above. This is because the Druze themselves believe that ‘*Souls cannot be divided and therefore the number of souls is finite.*’¹⁹

NOTES

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5. “Past Life Memories” As Spirits In The Room

While hypnotherapists can be fooled into believing the wrong conclusion regarding “past life” memories, some psychics and mediums know differently. This is because they can see or hear, psychically, the true source of the phenomena, as we saw with Anna Wickland in Chapter 3. On his website, *Spirits In The Room*, Alan Ross tells how he ditched his reincarnation beliefs and instead adopted the idea of spirits being behind past life memories. During a Past Life Regression (PLR) at a psychic fair in California, Ross was regressed by three psychics to “former lives”, which included that of an ancient Hebrew; a Crusader killed in battle; a medieval Frenchman who was robbed and murdered on the road outside Paris; and a World War I soldier who died in the trenches. Ross began vibrating strangely. Moments later, a matriarchal director stormed into the room, yelling ‘*Why are all these spirits in the room? Get rid of them! This reading is over!*’¹

It was weeks later, after playing what had happened over and over in his mind, that an explanation for the strange vibrations popped into Ross’s head.

*‘The director had been right that the room was filled with spirits and, moreover, they were hovering around me during the reading. And, it was the power of their combined aura fields that had the energy to vibrate my body.’*²

However he realized also that, just as with Past Life Regressionists,

*‘The psychics were indeed skilled in their craft and were able to read the identities of the spirits in the room and, in particular, their last experience on Earth - their death; but, I somehow knew with a strange certainty that the psychics were mistaken when they told me that the lives they were reading were my past lives when in reality they were the lives of the spirits in the room.’*³

Emmanuel Swedenborg wrote:

*'If a spirit were to speak from his own memory with a man, the man would not know otherwise than that the thoughts then in his mind were his own, although they were the spirit's thoughts. This would be like the recollection of something which the man had never heard or seen.... This is the source of the belief held by some of the ancients that after some thousands of years they were to return into their former life, or had returned.'*⁴

The presence of such disparate personalities gathered together around Alan Ross illustrates Swedenborg's conclusion that spirits are constantly around us and, furthermore, can originate from any era or location and mingle together. This factor could explain the uncanny accuracy in Helen Wambach's and Victor Zammit's studies, some of which were confirmed by specialist historians. After all, you can't get much more accurate than spirits who actually lived during the periods that Wambach regressed her clients to!

Such a possibility may also be relevant to the case of A J Stewart mentioned earlier (Chapter 1). It may be significant that A J's memories of James IV began around the time when she was visiting Jedburgh on the border of Scotland and England, and a mere hour's drive from Flodden Field. The memories began with a vivid dream in which she herself was the king being killed in battle. Might we speculate then, that her graphic memories were more than mere confabulation and that James IV's spirit- still restless after centuries owing to his violent death on the battlefield- entered into A J's personal space and produced at least some of the obscure knowledge she would later reveal in a novel?

Intriguingly, such a scenario may also explain Ian Wilson's perception of A J physically resembling James IV. In the phenomenon of physical mediumship, the medium becomes possessed by the spirit

they are channeling, and the whole physiology- particularly the face- may alter, uncannily molding into the known features of the spirit in its earth life. In light of such experiences, we can see the possibility that Dr Michael Newton's hypnotized subjects, rather than describing their own sojourn in the nebulous beyond "between lives", were in fact intimating the experiences of certain spirits who had turned up in Newton's office. (passing spirits are attracted to altered states, such as hypnotism). You would only need a small handful of these spirits to start with, in initiating a "norm" by describing their own experience of "clusters", as have been reported elsewhere (see Chapter 16). Expectancy is everything in such matters. And, as we shall see in Chapter 11, Newton's subjects differ dramatically from Joe Keeton's both in the between-life duration and in the geographical and historic range of incarnations.

Mishmash

Moreover, in *The Scole Experiment*, which has been attested to as among the best scientific evidence for life after death, involved a mishmash of disparate spirits from totally different centuries and continents, who came together despite having nothing at all in common during their earth lives: an Asian Indian, an Inca native, a Catholic priest, a Native American medicine man, as well as some early 20th century Westerners. So much for Michael Newton's "soul groups" who share past lives contemporary with each other. Incidentally, past lives are mentioned once, and only once in *The Scole Experiment*, tucked away in the appendix, where a spirit called Manu says he has '*Enjoyed many incarnations*';⁵ -the last of these being that of the Inca in Peru. Conversely, however, the Asian Indian spirit, Raji, was

'A lovable Indian character who was once in the military. While on Earth he was a 'Rajpoot', a type of prince who belonged to a caste of ancient Hindu warriors. He had served as a soldier on horseback

during his lifetime, and continued to be very fond of marching music, which he requested when he came to speak to the group and visitors.'
6

What is interesting here is that Raji, as a Hindu, might have been expected to cite his own incarnations on Earth. However, no mention is made of any. Indeed, the reference to his 'lifetime' in the singular implies this. But also worthy of note is that Raji seems to be a permanent resident of the spirit world. Yet, as a soldier while on earth, he nevertheless seems to have escaped the "wheel of rebirth" fundamental to Hindu belief, whereas the "holy man" in Jasbir Jat's case seemed to be stranded in the astral regions. My point here being that one wouldn't expect a soldier- however high ranking- to be spiritually advanced enough to escape rebirth, whereas a holy man might well be expected to. But there is another reason for mentioning Manu's claim. This is to provide evidence from elsewhere that shows how a spirit can claim to have reincarnated, yet has merely been "piggy-backing" on the real owner of the body, Here is a small extract from Wickland :

Spirit. It is the fourth time I have been reincarnated. (Obsessed sensitives.) Twice I got in a cripple.

Dr. What did they call you when you were a cripple?

Spirit. I had so many names, but you know, I liked the last time. I liked it very much to be a rich man's son, so I did not need to work. I had my father to work for me. I had a good time.⁷

Note how Wickland corrects the spirit's term 'reincarnated' with what his own experience revealed to be the true nature of the spirit's experience, namely that the spirit 'obsessed sensitives'. Note also that the spirit uses the first person form, hence, 'I liked being a rich man's son'- in exactly the same way as young children announce that they *are* their "past life". Steve Gamble confirms this factor:

*'These lost souls actually do believe they are reincarnating into a new life, THEIR life, and they cannot see or comprehend that they are merely possessing a living human soul.'*⁸

Meme

A further point of interest is that this spirit had “reincarnated” as a cripple for two lives. One wonders therefore how this can support any notion of Karma, since the first of these lives should surely have repaid the spirit’s “karmic debt” from a previous life? Yet another spirit in *The Scole Experiment*, who is relevant here, was John Paxton, who had been a 13th century friar. So here we have about 800 years since his earth life- which flagrantly contradicts many Life Between Life (LBL) researchers’ findings on the time spent between incarnations, as we shall see in Chapter 11. Likewise with all the other spirits, they had one solitary life, though some of them died in the 20th century. It is perfectly possible therefore that Manu simply believed in reincarnation while on earth, maybe because of his culture, and took that belief to the afterlife.

With regard to any LBL, the discoveries of Newton and his predecessors might yet comprise confabulation. It really requires no great stretch of the imagination for hypnotherapists skilled in Past Life Regression (PLR), sooner or later, to ponder upon some intermediate existence in the great beyond. And once a hypnotherapist has regressed a client to such a place, then published a book, the experience becomes encoded as a meme for others to hear about and recreate.

Multiple “Past Lives”.

Many reports are of individuals remembering *multiple* past lives. Can this really be put down to the spirit theory? In other words, is this some sort of serial possession causing them to be confused? Well, yes, quite possibly: serial possession, or perhaps serial cryptomnesia, or even both. Regarding possession, we saw in Alan Ross’s experience, several spirits from various places and periods were indeed perceived to be in attendance. As for cryptomnesia, we saw in

Chapter 1 just how convincing “past life” personalities can seem. Ian Stevenson rejected all these personalities as fictional, but as we have just seen, this may not always be the case.

But, it may be asked, why did the three psychics in Alan Ross’s case not identify his “past lives” as independent spirits, whereas the large lady director was able to? The answer is that it is highly likely the psychics were clairaudient, but not clairvoyant, as the director appears to have been (this phenomenon is common in Spiritualist circles, again like Anna Wickland). Reincarnation belief was well established in the late 1960s when Ross had his experience, owing to the likes of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Timothy Leary, and these psychics might only have been looking for this attribute.

NOTES

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6. *ibid*, p 264
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6. Strange Birthmarks Explained

Ian Stevenson regarded mysterious birthmarks as compelling evidence for reincarnation, since they seemed to correspond eerily to the manner in which a subject's "past life" died. Strange, then, that Stevenson provided no photographs of these in his books, even when requested to do so by fellow author Ian Wilson.

*'I asked Stevenson whether I might be allowed...a single birthmark photograph, or even the sight of a single photograph. Both requests were refused.'*¹

One can only wonder, why Stevenson was so reluctant to produce what could only have been seen as fairly solid support for his work? But no matter, for hypnotically regressed people can also reproduce the injuries sustained by their "past-life" subject. For example, Ann Dowling, as Sarah Williams in the 19th century, is beaten to death, and the very next day, her body is covered by real bruises. Likewise, Pauline McKay recalls Kitty Jay, who hanged herself and a vivid rope mark appears on her neck.²

The reincarnation believer will no doubt interpret such regressions as being real past lives of Ann and Pauline. Yet, as we have seen, such past lives can be confabulated. Besides which, reincarnation or not, such phenomena illustrates the power of the mind to produce dramatic physical marks in accord with the past life's demise. Moreover, such "evidence" is far from conclusive, as can be shown in several other situations which do not involve reincarnation or even the suspicion of it.

Present Life, Past Injuries...

Present-life hypnotic subjects have also demonstrated that violent memories can reproduce injuries in the same subject years later. Psychiatrist Dr. Derek Anton-Stephens relates how he induced a client to re-live a bloody assault made upon her in her younger days. The lady experienced the blood from the injury saturating her hands, while Anton-Stevens witnessed the corresponding wound appear on her scalp. Likewise, he recalls

*'a colleague of mine was able to photograph similar 'stigmata' on the bodies of formerly tortured prisoners of war.'*³

And Dr Raymond Moody described how a woman patient was regressed to her childhood and re-lived the cruel beatings by her father. Bleeding whip marks then appeared all over her naked body and were even photographed by doctors.⁴

Documented

But, even more relevant, is documented evidence from the past involving children's birthmarks and their relationship to the mother's experience while they were fetuses. An example of a mother suddenly acquiring a sympathetic mark with her child was recorded even in the early years of psychiatry. Charles Bardouin recorded how a child was almost beheaded by a sliding door and that the mother subsequently developed a raised and ruddy welt around her own neck, corresponding with where the child would have been struck.⁵

And going back still further are cases- recorded by physicians of the day- of mothers who impress their own distressing experiences onto their babies while in the womb, in the form of physical deformities. For example, in the 17th century, Jan Baptist van Helmont, a Flemish physiologist described how a local woman saw a soldier's arm cut off in a duel and went into labor. Her child was born with only one hand. Similarly, another pregnant woman was recorded as witnessing a soldier's arm cut off before giving birth to a one armed baby.⁶

Far-Fetched?

It might be thought of as far-fetched that a fetus could be born with a hand or arm amputated after its mother witnessed a sword fight. But is it really any more far-fetched than the idea of exterior souls, in attempting to reincarnate, doing exactly the same by impressing the fetus with the birthmarks associated with their own deaths? This, indeed, constituted one of Stevenson's main "proofs" of past lives. And is it any more far-fetched than that a violent death can be carried

through time hundreds of years, to then beset a modern person with the pain, as we shall see in Chapter 10? In light of such a claims by reincarnationists, a spirit impressing birthmarks on a child would be almost (pardon the pun) child's play.

And the phenomenon of stigmata also graphically reveals how Christ's perceived wounds can be reproduced on the hands and feet of devotees like Padre Pio and Therese Neumann. But surely no-one would conclude that all stigmata sufferers lived before as Jesus Christ! Besides, some of the sufferers were women like Neumann-unless she changed sex between incarnations!

No Friendly Neighborhood Ghost!

There are reports where the living have been injured by ghosts, as psychics like Holly Joy are only too aware :

*'A long time back I read that ghosts cannot hurt the living. Many recorded cases over decades have demonstrated otherwise, including myself after I was scratched following a paranormal investigation. It can be traumatic and often life changing experience. Ghost attacks do occur and often times happen to those who never believed it ghosts – until it happens to them.'*⁷

There is very little difference between such injuries and those purported to be from past lives, because for reincarnation to occur in the context of birthmarks, humans must have some form of spirit. Therefore, there are several ways in which the spirit can create physical phenomenon upon the physical body, including:

- a) a hypnotized person "re-living" a past-life event.
- b) a hypnotized person re-living a present-life event.
- c) a disturbed mother impressing marks upon her own fetus.
- d) a spirit impressing marks or scratches upon a living person.

If such marks correspond to how the spirit died, this may well be claimed as being due to reincarnation. As a last word, Botelho takes

the argument that birthmarks reflect past life injuries to its logical conclusion:

*'If it is as Stevenson thinks, will someone who died run with dozens of shots, such as the executions of rival gangs, then be reborn with scores of bullet wounds scattered throughout the body?...even more absurd...someone who died the victim of a violent auto accident, whose violence of impact ripped his head, then will be reborn in the next life with the body separated from the head?'*⁸

Thankfully, as far as I am aware, such a possibility has not yet appeared in the “past life” literature!

NOTES

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7. Spirits And Strange Languages

Subjects who begin spontaneously speaking in normally unfamiliar languages (xenoglossy) were regarded by Ian Stevenson as strong evidence of persons having lived before as a native speaker. However, xenoglossy is a common feature of both possession and mediumship. For example, 19th century psychic, Andrew Jackson Davis, spoke fluent Hebrew while in trance.¹ Stevenson was understandably impressed by children who spoke languages they could not possibly have learned in their short lifetime. However, in one case, a toddler had parents who were Canadian. His grandma, however, spoke only Hungarian until she died. The boy never spoke till aged three, then, one night, he began speaking fluent Hungarian to someone unseen in his bedroom. When he talked again, a year later, he spoke English with a Hungarian accent!² Here, the spirit explanation - that of the boy's dead grandma coaching him- seems easily the most plausible.

Mouthpiece

Carl Wickland cites cases of

*'A patient who, although having no knowledge of French or music sang well the "Marseillaise" in French when placed under the influence of an anesthetic.... the uneducated domestic, who, in delirium, recited classic Latin as perfectly as her former employer, a Professor of Latin, had done during his life...'*³

Dr Susan B Martinez also cites people whose ability to speak in tongues goes way beyond a national anthem. For example, in African cases ascribed to possession by spirits, the victims are reported to have spoken fluent English or Swahili, despite not previously uttering or understanding one single word of those languages.⁴ Charles Tweedale, whose wife, Madge, was also a medium, tells of how she awoke one morning, chattering away in Italian - a language she barely knew.⁵ Significantly, Tweedale was, at the time, being visited by the spirit of Antonio Stradivarius, the great Italian violin maker, who died in the earlier half of the 18th century. Tweedale discovered it was this

influence that initiated his own lifelong interest in playing and making violins, and even led to the rediscovery of the unique varnish that Stradivarius used on his own violins!

But aren't some of these languages obsolete? Yes, but so are some of the spirits! Seriously, though, this could fairly easily be the work of spirits who have remained earthbound. As we shall see, in Chapters 9 & 10, time passes differently in the afterworld and supernatural reports are full of ghosts who are centuries old, still haunting the same places, unable to move on.

Animated

To emphasize how real and animated the spirit world is. Here is a Wickland case involving multiple spirits who had attached to one of his patients. The patient was sobbing and screaming in a mix of English and Spanish (which normally she could not speak):

*'There were three spirits—a girl named Mary, her suitor, an American, and his Mexican rival, Matilla. Both of the men had vehemently loved the girl and as fiercely hated each other. In a jealous rage one had killed the girl, and then in a desperate fight the two rivals had killed each other. All were unaware of being "dead," although Mary said, weeping wretchedly: "I thought they were going to kill each other, but here they are, still fighting." ...With great difficulty the three spirits were convinced that they had lost their physical bodies, but at last they recognized the truth and were taken away by our invisible co-workers.'*⁶

Here we have the hallmarks of obsession: the disturbing interchanges that might otherwise be hilarious, were it not for the intense suffering of the mortal patient. There is the violent demise of the two spirits, together with the lack of realization that they are, in fact, dead. Importantly, we have the speaking in tongues foreign to the victim- in this case, Spanish. Also worthy of note is that the change of death has done nothing to reform their personalities or to defuse their passions.

NOTES

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8. Violent Death Is Over-Represented

'Top Heavy'

Susan B Martinez points out another strange feature of reincarnation research, namely that the case studies of "past lives" are

*'Top-heavy with sudden death... perhaps 7 or 8 out of 10 such "previous personalities" met a violent or untimely demise... Contrast this 75% with the mere 7% of the general population who die in a sudden or violent manner. How can reincarnation be "natural" as its proponents claim, if this lopsided statistic puts the lie to its normality? Clearly there is something else at work...'*¹

I suggest that 'something else' may be the propensity for spirits who died suddenly or violently to become earthbound and therefore likely to seek the living to attach themselves to. And indeed Ian Stevenson himself found

*'A high incidence of violent death in the supposed previous life and the mention of the way of death. This feature occurs in the cases of all ten cultures for which we have examined groups of cases; although the incidence of violent death in the cases varies from one culture to another; it is far higher among the cases than in the general populations from which they are drawn.'*²

Dr Jim Tucker -Stevenson's successor in the field of case histories "suggestive of reincarnation"- came to the same unwavering conclusion regarding how violent or untimely deaths dominate the case load:

*'In 70% of the cases the previous person died by unnatural means, meaning murder, suicide, or accident... a distinct factor...even in the natural death cases ...where a quarter of the ... cases is under the age of 15. So again, there is something about dying an unnatural death or dying young that makes it more likely that these memories will then appear down the road.'*³

But doesn't reincarnation researchers' work suggest that remembering past lives is an abnormal activity? Could this be the reason for the preponderance of violent deaths, together with the small window of time that the memories tend to surface? I'd say that, on the contrary, Stevenson, Tucker and others do not appear to regard past life recall as abnormal at all. Rather, they became convinced of the reality of reincarnation to the exclusion of any other possibility. In fact, the very nature of the research at UVA seems to have been to champion reincarnation. We saw also how reincarnation believers have dreamed up the notion of "walk-ins" and "split souls" to paper over the cracks regarding birth/death anomalies (see Chapter 2) and how unrealistic such an explanation appears to be.

Fumbling

The violent deaths in the research- which Stevenson and Tucker admit is around 70%- is thus up to ten times greater than that in the general population who die violently (see Chapter 8). Such a huge differential compares extremely favorably for the theory that obsessing spirits are earthbound, as indeed the Wicklands observed. Similarly, the fading of a child's memories is somewhat the opposite of what might be expected, i.e. that as the child's brain develops, the past-life memories should become clearer, not more vague. The actual situation is much better explained by the effects of the child moving away from the psychic realm as it grows older, into a much stronger sense of self and personal identity. This, in turn, strengthens the child's resistance to the influence of spirits.

As we shall see in Chapter 17, dying young can represent another strong factor in impelling a spirit to remain close to the earth planes. But, once again, did Wickland, one hundred years ago, discover the real explanation for this statistical imbalance? And should more researchers discontinue their fumbling down the dark alley of "past lives" and at least consider the possibility that such memories are

transmitted by the lost soul who retains them? Such spirits are, unfortunately, only too numerous:

*'Millions remain for a time in the earth sphere, and often in the environment of their earth lives, still held by their habits or interests.'*⁴

They Heard It On The Grapevine?

Another explanation is more cynical, but nevertheless must be considered as a factor in “past life” reports, especially in reincarnation-believing cultures:

*'Violent deaths are more likely to be reported in the media... and are thus more likely to travel around from village to village where they could be overheard by children. But whatever the explanation, the curious fact remains of excessive violent deaths in reported Past Life Experiences (PLEs).'*⁵

This excess is indeed the case in Dwairy’s study of Druze who remembered past lives. Out of nine subjects studied, eight of their “past life” personalities died violently and the other one prematurely, as the table below shows. There is a mix of close proximity to a fair distance involved in these cases, with “past-life” personages living from less than 200 metres away to 160 kms.

K -	Mistakenly shot by a friend, aged 25
Majid -	Car accident, aged 36
A -	Car bomb in war, aged 38
H -	Car accident, aged 24
E -	Shot on honeymoon, aged 27
Y -	Shot during a robbery, aged 30
G -	Suicide by hanging, aged 18
Z -	Car accident, aged 13
Q -	Terminal illness, aged 32

It cannot be over-stated that the Druze community, much like the Hindu population, is biased towards reincarnation. Thus, all their paranormal references will be framed within the context of rebirth. There is, moreover, the cultural element in each case of males reincarnating only as other males. (see Chapter 12) However, unlike the Indian cases which, as we shall see later (Chapter 28), aroused Ian Wilson's suspicions of social climbing, there was no obvious difference in social class between those purported to be the present and the past life. Here, though, there is not the obvious caste structure in place as among the Hindus, -the Muslim Druze being somewhat more egalitarian.

Inherited Memories?

Psychologist Michael Jawer offers a scientific approach based upon the phenomenon of epigenetics- the passing on of experiences of a forerunner to generations who have not had the experience, yet nevertheless react to the same stimulus:

*'We know that rats that are given even a mild shock somehow transfer the fear associated with the particular stimulus on to their pups, and even to their pups' pups. Could there be a mechanism...where memories associated with the struggling person's circumstances are preserved?...akin to the echoes, preserved down the eons, of the Big Bang, observable through faint but distinct background radiation. Except...the intensity of the person's feelings...might somehow be captured in a fusion of space and time. This "imprint" might become available for another, nascent life form—not "his" or "her" memories (as in reincarnation), but a transmutation just the same.'*⁶

Again, this is akin to Sheldrake's "morphic resonance", except demonstrated under laboratory conditions. It will thus appeal to both the metaphysically inclined and the materialist alike. In this scenario, the intense distress caused by violent death is frozen in time and

imprinted in the ether, like a file uploaded to the Cloud, to be downloaded by a suitably sensitive recipient at some future stage. Studies have shown that water, too, seems to possess a power to “remember” strong emotions.

Proactive

It's a splendid idea but, like Sheldrake's theory, I have to reject epigenetics as an explanation for past life memories, as Jawer seems to imply. This is because, firstly, people often die violently or suddenly *without* any trauma, i.e. death is instantaneous. And even when violence has taken place, some spirits still do not realize they are dead, as in the case of Mary and her two love rivals we saw in the last chapter. There remains, however, the possibility of the spirit remaining earthbound, not realizing it must move on. Secondly, the spirit of Sobha Ram was *proactive*, rather than dormant, in the life of Jasbir, indeed causing the young boy to reject his lower caste circumstances. The same was the case with Charlie Herrman's obsession of Jack T. This, together with a spirit's belief in reincarnation, constitutes a recipe for obsessing the living- especially children who are easy prey due to their inhabiting the *theta* brain state between reality and fantasy, and so rendering them especially susceptible.

NOTES

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9. Is Reincarnation Compulsory Or Voluntary?

Lessons?

In their books, Shirley McLaine, Mia Dolan, and David Icke assert that Earth is a school and we are here to learn lessons, which will be repeated if necessary. As Dolan puts it *'If you flunk out of school, your parents put you in another one'*.¹ And in his first book, Icke wrote of certain people

*'Living life after life in similar circumstances, because they don't get the lesson right first time. So it is good to know our Guides are close by to watch over us.'*²

The implication is clear. If we *must* get these lessons right eventually, reincarnation is compulsory. Why else would any reasonable person want to keep living the same sort of life over and over, like a nightmarish version of the movie *Groundhog Day*? It must be said, also, that these 'Guides' don't seem to be very proficient at their job of selecting lives for people, if some unfortunates have to undergo such repetitious treatment. This apparent contradiction permeates reincarnation belief, as in the following appraisal by John Hamer:

*'Spirit guides... assist us... in any way they can, often pointing us in the right direction when we struggle with any aspect of the lessons we are here to complete. In addition, immediately prior to each reincarnation, we are encouraged by our spirit guides to choose a specific future life from the options they present to us, that will best fulfill our goals and help us learn from our past mistakes and aberrations, thus accelerating our growth.'*³

That word 'lessons' again. But you really have to wonder at the woolly claims made by reincarnationists, even in the same paragraph. The 'past mistakes and aberrations' we have incurred were, it is previously asserted, the work of these spirit guides 'pointing us in the right direction' in the first place! (Hamer has otherwise written

various scholarly and well-reasoned arguments on alternate history. But I do not agree with him that reincarnation has been suppressed. On the contrary, I think it receives far too much attention!)

Overall, the condescending idea that we are like schoolchildren here on earth to complete lessons adds up to a gloomy philosophy. Reincarnation is therefore mandatory, or to put it another way, that Karma operates. However Dr Raynor Johnson tells us the opposite:

*'If the soul decides once more to put forth a personality into physical existence, it is quite improbable that in the process of widening experience anything repetitive will be involved.'*⁴

Marty Spellar is even more emphatic:

*'Celestial law is based on individual free will. An endless chain of involuntary reincarnations contravenes this law.'*⁵

In the following exchange, a client of Dr Michael Newton confirms how there is at least a certain amount of choice in the rebirth process:

DrN: What if you had second thoughts about your choice of a time frame or a particular human body... if you resisted coming back to earth shortly before you were due to incarnate?

*S: It's not that...rigid. I would always discuss the possibilities...my concerns for a new life with my tutor and companions before making a firm commitment...*⁶

And elsewhere:

Dr N: Now, as to your choices. I am curious if two bodies were sufficient for your examination in the place of life selection.

*S: We don't need a lot of choices for lives once the counselors get their heads together about our desires...*⁷

Balancing

Here we are shown fairly unequivocal elements of Newton's cases, i.e. the possibility of "aborted missions" owing to flexibility in the choice of a life, together with the reference to the incarnating spirit's 'desires'. Yet In one of Newton's cases (number 26) a male Viking warrior fast forwards one thousand years to become a crippled girl in late 19th century New England. This dramatic contrast in physique, gender and historical period is, nevertheless, still down to Karma- but merely as a balancing act, as Newton confirms:

*'Regardless of what mental and physical tools are used throughout the use of many bodies, the laws of Karma will prevail. If the soul chooses one extreme, somewhere down the line this will be counterbalanced by an opposite choice to even out development. The physical lives...are examples of karmic compensation. The Hindus believe a rich man sooner or later must become a beggar for his soul to develop adequately.'*⁸

Muddled

This seems decidedly muddled, and it must be asked, if the soul is compelled by 'karmic compensation' to undergo such extremes of fortune, or if a rich man *must* become a beggar, how can this possibly be 'choice', or 'desires'? Try telling your fit athletic male friend that, in order to facilitate his spiritual growth, he must crash his nice car, crippling himself in the process, and afterward lose most of his income, his wife and children and his house, and live out the remainder of his life as a female cripple. I wonder what he would say to you? Do you think such a fate would be his 'choice' or his 'desire'? (Obviously I intend no offense to cripples, I am merely contrasting the vastly different situations). By such reasoning, the hospitals should be full of such persons who have willfully maimed themselves.

It is unsurprising that Hinduism is brought in. The Dalits -the lowest Hindu caste- must relish having to clean latrines without any other choice of employment, or forage through refuse heaps to find food, thus balancing out their (presumably) richer former existence as Brahmins. But In Newton's case studies, Karma doesn't mean that you "deserved" your present life owing to good or bad conduct in a previous one- it's simply a cosmic balancing of the books.

More Confusion

However, even avid followers of Dr Newton, like Robert Martini, can get tangled in this confused web, as in the following offering:

*'Free will is the law of the Universe, and it's up to us who we want to return as, or even if we want to reincarnate.'*⁹

No 'balancing' of experiences here, nor 'karmic compensation'. I can freely choose not to be a cripple if I so desire, presumably no matter how many lifetimes are involved. In fact I don't even have to reincarnate at all if I don't want to. But elsewhere we read that the consequences for some upon opting once more to reincarnate into Earth life can be dire:

*'Some of these poor sensitive souls unfortunately tend to commit suicide over and over again in desperation and many more of them choose not to return here again.'*¹⁰

Again, I must admit to being confused by this whole business. If these 'poor sensitive souls' can *choose* not to return to this earthly life, why are they reincarnating repeatedly, only to kill themselves? Plus, we see again how utterly incompetent those Guides are, what with their "planning" of lives failing over and over, sometimes resulting in suicide. Why can't they get things right first time? And who then rearranges our real 'goals' in light of such difficulties?

Astonishing

Another highly relevant -and quite astonishing- detail is contained in an account of the work of Robert Munroe during experiments with astral projection:

*'In addition to souls stuck on earth, Monroe found there to be bands of energy around the planet where people are stuck. In at least one of these, he found souls caught up in hedonistic pursuits where they were mindlessly pursuing orgiastic sexual activity.'*¹¹

Say *what?! Sexual activity? Astral orgasms!* Isn't that the highest goal of some religions, and a far more reliable (and fun) way to spend eternity than reincarnating? This situation should appeal greatly to those people who want to be reborn in order to continue the pleasures of the body. Well, you can have sex in the afterlife, too, so why even bother reincarnating! But to continue with Monroe's astral excursions, our voyager also found other souls stuck in far less appealing circumstances, including the spirit of a sailor shipwrecked in the Irish Sea in the 1840s, still clinging to the wreckage of his ship, and another spirit who had been bricked up in the cellar of a French chateaux, still screaming for help, like in an Edgar Allan Poe tale.¹²

*'Because of different frequencies in the various realms or levels of the spirit world, most beings that reside in the realm of light and higher are unable to descend to the earth plane. Thus, the out-of-body explorers performed an important service that may otherwise never have taken place.'*¹³

Compelled

This situation seems incompatible with what we have seen with the "Mercy Gang" who assisted the Wicklands greatly with lost souls

(Chapter 3), the advanced spirits associated with the Scole Experiment (Chapter 5) and also most of the history of Spiritualism whereby higher spirits have communicated with and often helped us mortals. However it might not be a matter of either/or.

Communication might depend on the connection: for example, the skills of Anna Wickland as a medium might be a factor. There may simply be a shortage of spirits able to communicate, together with mediums able to receive the messages and the help offered. And, as we shall see in Chapter 17, even children's spirits can and do go "off the radar". Such a situation makes it even more imperative for a spirit not to become earthbound, especially in trying to reincarnate.

Besides, such a situation bodes even worse for reincarnation, for, if these souls had indeed gone "off grid", then this, at least, must rule out Karma. Only if reincarnation is a choice is this feasible. This is because, if Karma operates, then these souls cannot possibly remain stuck, as they would be compelled by Karma's irresistible force to reincarnate (*all* souls are supposed to be judged and are consequently liable to reward or punishment as Karma dictates). Indeed, the above 'important service' by Monroe presents another problem for the reincarnation school of thought. For, if these 'out-of-body explorers' had not undertaken this work of assisting trapped souls in ascending from their situation, then, logically, these souls would not have been able to reincarnate. And while the fate of these poor wretches was, indeed, Hellish – with reincarnation possibly a more merciful option! - that is not the point, which is: where was Karma? Where were the 'lessons'? And just where were these Guides we hear so much about - were they asleep on the job? Of course, if such observations suggesting that reincarnation cannot be mandatory are correct, then McLaine, Dolan and Icke have got it wrong, and so have millions of Hindus and Buddhists.

Depraved

But in any case, there is a simple response to the notion of our lives being ‘lessons’:

‘What then about souls like Hitler, Stalin, Nero and the numerous depraved people on earth at the moment, did they deliberately choose a life of evil and what they could learn by their wicked actions?’¹⁴

Moreover, in the spiritual state that is our true being, we have not need for such excursions into matter to learn anything. Indeed, David Icke seems to have revised his position in a later work, where he writes ‘*All that Is doesn’t need to go to school.*’¹⁵ A recent video on *youtube* had a woman who experienced a NDE where she recalled her past lives, and her Guides were waiting to greet her also. But just who are these Guides and how can they keep turning up after every incarnation? Do they not reincarnate themselves, and if so, how come their incarnations always coincide with the person they are supposed to be guiding?

Barbaric

But there is another, extremely disquieting, objection to the whole idea of choosing an incarnation. To quote Martini again,

‘One of the things that surprises people...is just how much free will there is. Every soul chooses its own lifetime.’¹⁶

Am I therefore expected to believe that the victims of the hideous deaths in wars, disease, famine and natural disasters chose this fate in the great beyond? And what in God’s name did the innocent victims- men, women and children- of Vlad the Impaler, the Inquisition or the Witch hunts come to learn through suffering and dying in excruciating agony, sometimes over days? Who in their right mind would consent in some pre-existent state to such options? And what

“wise” spirit guides selected these hideous torments for their sufferers ? It may be suggested that Vlad and company were incarnated as who they were to teach the rest of humanity how *not* to behave. But would you set fire to your cat in order to show your child, via the animal’s howls of pain, how *not* to behave? Who consented to be flayed alive, as was done to Hypatia and Mani? Who agreed to be slow roasted to death on a spit, as Geoffrey de Molay was ? Or, like Guy Fawkes, horribly tortured before being cruelly hung, drawn and quartered? Even in modern times, the victim of a stoning, under fundamentalist sharia law, may suffer a slow and agonizing death, as might a condemned prisoner even in the USA, executed by lethal injection.

And what of the executioners? Who would assent to partake in these barbaric punishments? Indeed, who would even agree to be incarnated as one of the crowd in the public square to witness these spectacles? And if not by consent, who would condemn sentient beings to such horrors? Is it seriously being suggested that ‘wise’ spirit guides selected these hideous torments for their sufferers? You may protest that such atrocities must have come about by accident. But, as Martini assures us, ‘*There are no coincidences.*’¹⁷ It should be remembered also, in this light, that Carl Wickland’s subjects freely chose the bodies they became trapped in-this being purely on the basis of a belief in reincarnation, rather than being assigned a body as the Law of Karma (or ‘Guides’) would require. PLR practitioner, Irina Nola writes cheerfully

‘Most of my clients crossed into 5D reality after past-life death, meet their friends and Guides, get healing and participate in the planning of their next life, it is not just ‘assigned’ to them, nobody makes them reincarnate, they do want to have another trip to Earth - unless they had a really bad experience last time, in this case, they can stay on the Other Side for a long time.’¹⁸

However, I would suggest that ‘5-D reality’ is the true, and permanent, spirit world we will all eventually end up in. Importantly, spirits can foresee the future, as Charles Tweedale demonstrates

throughout his works. Tweedale sent letters to a local newspaper with advanced predictions of events sometimes months away, which invariably came to pass. What then would be the point of planning or lessons, when it is already known in advance what is to take place on Earth? Even without this factor, the sheer pointlessness of such lessons in reincarnation doctrine is expressed in the following post:

*'It makes no sense for us to be here repeatedly to "learn lessons" if we are forced to get amnesia and forget what we learned in our last life... We all know that without memory, one cannot learn. We must retain what we learn in order to advance. I would never send my child to school to learn if memory wipes were forced every time they go. They would never advance.'*¹⁹

The wisdom of the masses, as so often, exceeds that of the "experts". Paul Gilbert echoes this sheer pointlessness of such rebirths:

*'Those who believe reincarnation also don't explain why, just as you acquire some wisdom, you die, forget everything and have to start all over.'*²⁰

Choice Or Karma? Why It Must Be One Or The Other

Reincarnation belief, then, falls mainly into two, incompatible, camps. In the first camp are those who believe rebirth is compulsory. These include Hindus and Buddhists with their "wheel of rebirth" which must be escaped. In the other camp are many New Agers, and peoples such as the Druze and the Tlingits, who have no concept of Karma. However, the idea that we can choose whether or not to reincarnate must rule out Karma, because 'choice' and Karma' are diametrically opposed concepts: you simply cannot have one half of the population bound by the pitiless constraints of Karma while the other half is free to choose who they want to be. As a consequence,

this means that if reincarnation operates without Karma, we are left with a major problem, because, as Blake emphasizes,

*'If reincarnation wasn't a law-governed process it would be totally random; and if it were totally random there would be no relationship whatsoever between actions and consequences. For example, a mass murderer might be rewarded with a huge fortune in his next incarnation... If Karma cannot work, the doctrine of reincarnation collapses.'*²¹

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10. “Past Life” Trauma As Spirit Influence

Some hypnotherapists nowadays incorporate Past Life Regression (PLR) into their services, although not all the hypnotherapists who practise PLR actually believe in reincarnation themselves. Rather, the regression may still produce a desirable resolution through detecting the origin of the present day problem in a “past life” - but as a placebo effect rather than a reality. For example, John Hamer tells of a man with intractable back pain which had remained unrelieved by doctors, chiropractors and physiotherapists. So, in desperation he tried hypnoRegression, whereby

‘In being regressed back to a past life in medieval times, the subject found himself on a battlefield... he described the scene... vividly as he was captured by the enemy and held down by several of them whilst another of their number ‘ran him through’ with a sword into his back, thus ending his current life.’¹

Happily, through this experience, the man’s incurable backache was resolved. Hamer concludes,

‘Understanding the source of the discomfort, it would appear that the pain had been psychologically and even physically ‘exorcised’ in some way that no-one can really explain.’²

But compare that report with the following, as recounted by Carl Wickland:

An unusual type of psychic invalidism, due to spirit influence, was the case of Mrs. G., who had for many years suffered intensely from a peculiar spinal affliction, which baffled all skill of physicians. After Mrs. G. had been under our care for some time a spirit who had died of a broken back and neck was removed and controlled Mrs. Wickland. The guiding intelligences explained that he had drifted into the aura of the patient when she was a child and had become

*enmeshed in her nervous system, thus transferring to his victim the physical condition under which he had died, and which he still believed himself to be suffering from. With the removal of the spirit the patient was promptly relieved and suffered no more pain in the back.*³

Striking

The parallels are striking. Yet, one is asserted to be owing to a past life experience by the patient, while the other is claimed as the work of a spirit infusing its victim with the pain it had endured during its own life. I would therefore propose the alternative explanation for the case Hamer refers to, other than reincarnation, i.e. that a medieval spirit attached itself to the unfortunate subject. Carl Wickland continues:

*'Spirits who are ignorant of having lost their physical bodies often hold firmly in mind the thought of their former physical condition and continue to suffer pain. This "error of the mortal mind" persists until an understanding of transition and spiritual laws is reached, when freedom from ideas of physical limitations is attained. When spirits who are under this delusion of suffering and disease come into the auras of mortals their condition is conveyed.'*⁴

Wickland's patient began as a child. And, just as a mother can transfer birthmarks to a fetus as we saw (Chapter 6), obsessing spirits can transfer their injuries. Charles Tweedale reports another example of transference of pain from spirit to victim. Tweedale was visited by the spirit of Horatio Nelson, a century after the admiral's death at Trafalgar, when Nelson was shot by a sniper aloft the French ship *Redoubtable*. Tweedale tells how, at Nelson's first manifestation, his wife Madge -herself a highly competent medium- was overcome with a severe pain between the shoulders and at the base of the neck. Later, Tweedale researched how Nelson died and discovered that

*'The ball fired from the mizzen-top of the Redoubtable hit him on the left shoulder, piercing the epaulette, then, slanting down toward the spine, shattered it.'*⁵

Tweeddale emphasizes that his wife would not have read such an account of Nelson's death, nor any book on historical wars, having *'A great distaste for the subject'*⁶

Mistake

Here is another similar account of a spirit transferring its pain to its victim. Dr. Shakuntala Modi is a psychiatrist who performs psychic healing. One of her female patients, just like in Hamer's example, complained of severe stomach pain that could not be resolved by the usual methods:

*'Through regression techniques she soon discovered that her father who passed away in 1974 while she was an infant died of stomach cancer. The father claimed that when he went to comfort her, he got caught in her body and could not leave. It was quite obvious that her father's blemishes were able to transfer onto his own daughter without reincarnation being the reason. I also think this is the case with others who believe they may have been reincarnated as well. We're usually surrounded by spirits and their thoughts and blemishes can interfere with our own thoughts, which we can mistake for past life experiences. Most people who research reincarnation do not research spirit possession or other Psi.'*⁷

But is it feasible that a 14th century spirit could still be around in the 21st century? The answer is yes. As we saw already, Alan Ross's experiences (Chapter 5) show it is perfectly possible for a medieval spirit to attach itself, while Wickland's work shows how a spirit can transfer its pain to its victim. In this light, it is possible that A J Stewart (Chapter 1) was likewise targeted by the spirit of James IV, who himself died violently in battle. And it may be that, during PLR, a client is relaxed enough for the spirit to be released from their aura. Another important point is that the constraints of our world are

somewhat invalidated in the next world. As the spirit of Antonio Stradivarius explained poetically to Charles Tweedale's daughter:

*'When Dorothy asked him whether it did not seem a long time since he was in the mortal. Instantly came the response: 'As yesterday I sat on a stool/With candle light in the gloom/Making my fiddles supreme/Those years seem to me like a dream.'*⁸

And this from Stephen Blake in the magazine *Psychic World*.

*'We are advised by our spirit friends and teachers that our earthly experiences of time and space have no reality on the spiritual planes. A hundred years of our time is as nothing to them and that our earthly lives pass by within the twinkling of an eye. All unfolds within a spacious present and distinctions between time and space are without meaning...What appears, to us, as a temporal sequence is simultaneous to them.'*⁹

As we shall see in Chapter 26, this is how spirits can foretell the future.

Counterpart

The phenomenon of "phantom limbs" might yield another clue as to what is really going on in such cases. This is a well-documented syndrome whereby, even though the physical limb has been removed, the amputee still feels the pain as if it still existed. I would suggest that the pain is felt through the limb's spirit counterpart, and that this fits nicely with the idea of a spirit impressing its pain upon a mortal. Conversely, a problem for the reincarnation theory is that we have also to assume that Hamer's subject's life as a warrior was the one immediately before his present one. Otherwise, we have to envisage possibly a succession of incarnations, wherein the warrior continued to suffer his death agony. And where would Karma come in, in that case? Had not our warrior paid back his karmic debt through his unyielding pain?

Multitudes

Remember, too, that multitudes of people have died in agony on battlefields all over the world throughout our ugly history. And until recent times, severe pain and suffering existed in countless other everyday ways: arthritis, sciatica, kidney and bladder stones, gout, migraine, broken and dislocated bones, earache, toothache and, of course, childbirth. Literally billions of people should therefore be afflicted by the resumption of these torments, surely beginning in early childhood? Modern medicine is generally able to alleviate the bulk of these, even if it failed in Hamer's example above. Cryptomnesia, and the other, more mundane, explanation- i.e. the "placebo" effect- cannot be ruled out. In this scenario, the patient believes that the hypnotherapist will discover, via past life regression, the source of the problem. The patient's mind then confabulates a story: a knightly battle, a brave warrior deprived of his life in gruesome fashion, or, perhaps a warrior queen like Boudicca or her daughters may have been likewise invoked. Less romantically, the pain and suffering could be due to the throes of medieval childbirth or the trials of daily life and its often backbreaking toil. Once "remembered", the trouble is identified and expelled.

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11. Inconsistencies Between Researchers

Reincarnation research is rife with inconsistencies, with therapists disagreeing, often vehemently from study to study.

They Disagree On A Life Between Lives (LBL)

Beginning with *Journey of Souls (1994)*, Dr Michael Newton described how some 7,000 of his subjects experienced a distinct life between life (LBL). Newton follower, Richard Martini, assures us that

*'There was consistency of reporting; it didn't matter whether a client had a deep religious belief system or not...in deep hypnosis, they all told us the same things.'*¹

However, the conclusions drawn by British hypnotherapist Joe Keeton- who claimed to have regressed some 9,000 subjects- could not be more at odds with Newton's. As Ian Wilson discovered,

*'The only preconceived notion he has expressed is that there is no limbo, no rest between one life and another. From death to conception is instantaneous.'*²

Martini filmed 45 of Dr Newton's clients and studied lots more, which confirmed for him Newton's findings. But presumably he would have hit a blank wall with Joe Keeton's clients. And, conversely, if Keeton had founded a school like Newton's for PLR, this lack of a Life Between Life (LBL) would surely have featured among hypnotized subjects.

It should be added, also, that two of the most influential figures in the reincarnation literature, Ian Stevenson and Michael Newton, had little in common on the subject of LBLs. Stevenson only mentioned the possibility in passing, as when he compared cultural differences, as

we shall see in the next chapter. Newton, by contrast, featured LBLs as a central and essential component of his research.

They Disagree On The Range Of Past Lives

Also inconsistent is how far back clients' past lives go. Thus, Keeton's subjects are reborn usually as British people going back only to around 1600 CE.³ This is in contrast to the exotic locations of Arnall Bloxham's subjects which are multi-cultural and go right back to the days of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Meanwhile, Derek Cressell's clients, like Keeton's, reincarnate only as British, but unlike Keeton's instantly reborn subjects, Cressell's clients can experience gaps of several decades between each life.

And Ian Stevenson's Asian Indian cases revealed distances of up to 300 miles (in one case 5,000), but in contrast to Keeton's subjects, there were between-life gaps of anywhere from a few months up until 19 years.⁴ As for Dr Newton, his clients go back to prehistoric times and sometimes change sex:

*'Starting from his first life as a Cro-Magnon man...some 30,000 years ago....From about 3.000 BC to 500 BC, my client lived a number of lives in the Middle East during...Sumerian, Babylonian and Egyptian cultures...even in lives as a woman...in the fourteenth century, a European chronicler....in Japan, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, he was a member of the clan of the Bleeding Crane.....he popped up as the wife of an American farmer on the frontier in the nineteenth century.'*⁵

They Disagree Whether Lives Are Planned Or Not

Martini tells us that

'Usually there's a great deal of planning that goes on before a lifetime, with all of your friends and loved ones who are going to be involved with you. You have to seriously think about the type of body

and brain that are most compatible with you, or that might challenge you - these are all parameters we consider.’⁶

However, Ian Stevenson’s own research refutes this:

‘Ian Stevenson’s studies have found little evidence that “reincarnated personalities” actually do much planning for their next lives. Nor do they demonstrate much spiritual evolution in their newly reincarnated bodies.’⁷

Which somewhat defeats the object of the supposed purpose of rebirth, i.e. to progress spiritually. We saw earlier, Ian Stevenson’s rebuke towards hypnotism as a reliable vehicle for accessing past lives. No wonder that elsewhere, too, he reinforces that position when he dismisses the memories obtained as *‘Foolish implausibilities that disfigure most hypnotically induced personalities.’⁸*

Inconsistencies Between LBLs and NDEs

Mike Prescott contrasts Newton’s *Journey of Souls* with most NDE reports:

‘The life review, described in so many NDEs, is absent from Newton’s reports.. there is also ...very little discussion of.. Summerland -- the earthlike environment ... gardens, meadows, houses, birds, etc... for the most part the afterlife environment, as they depict it, seems to consist of blobs of color (which are souls) zipping around.’⁹

It might be asked why it is that people who access past life memories spontaneously, i.e. without being hypnotically regressed- especially young children- tend not to report these “blobs”? It appears that, for most of them, it’s only the “previous” life while in this world that is remembered. There is also the possibility of transmission of ideas between clients, which can thus create certain expectations. Ultimately, this process may create memes, as Irina Nola implies:

*'Most of [Michael Newton's] clients read 'Journey of Souls' before they came for the LBL session, so they were already expecting to see all the beings and places described in the first book... Which makes the "research" value of his books and his huge statistics very questionable... it is ... hard to tell if Guides or Councils really exist objectively, or are the representation of their own Superconscious mind and archetypes of the collective unconscious.'*¹⁰

Mixing It

LBLs can also be incorporated into NDEs. Thus, some people, during NDEs, review past lives as well as the present one. However, this is unsurprising, as reincarnation has become a powerful part of Western belief these days, especially in New Age publications. And, just as with LBLs, NDEs can be variable, even unpredictable. In some NDEs, rather than the feelings of peace and euphoria that characterize many experiences, a very small minority have produced Hellish landscapes, even among normal, decent people (significantly, young children do not have these, probably because the appropriate memes are not yet present) A casual glance at *youtube* can provide a whole range of different reports of the afterlife by people who claim they've had an NDE: in fact, almost as many types of NDE as there are people. Some involve past lives, but others don't. NDEs can also vary greatly between both cultures and age groups, for example,

*'Many Indians report meeting the Hindu king of the dead, Yamraj, while Americans often claim to have met Jesus. Children typically describe encountering friends and teachers "in the light".'*¹¹

Similarly,

'The NDE of a 40-year-old white male from Nebraska might include visions of a shimmering white, bearded male beckoning

*him through pearl-encrusted gates; the NDE of a 12-year-old boy from Papua New Guinea probably will not...The Mapuche people of South America and residents of Hawaii are more likely to see landscapes and volcanoes, whereas NDEs in Thailand and India rarely involve landmarks, tunnels or light; for Tibetans, light features more heavily, as do illusions of reincarnation...Europeans and North Americans often visualize beautiful gardens; intriguingly, the Kalai of Melanesia are more inclined to see an industrialized world of factories.'*¹²

Thus, the NDE, so respected by many people, proves to be subject to the same enormous variation as “past life” memories. Consider the following report, from a young African male who had been attacked by a lioness:

*'I could see myself going into some kind of a trance. A highway suddenly opened up before me. It seemed to be going endlessly into the sky. Along it were a lot of stars, also spreading up to the sky. Each time I tried to get on the highway, the stars would block my way. I just stood there not knowing what to do. After a while, the highway and stars disappeared. I woke up and found myself in a hospital bed.'*¹³

There was no tunnel, no life review, no relatives to greet him. Neither was there, as in Newton's LBL scenario, the Guides, the “clusters”, the friends and loved ones who reincarnate with us.

Powerful

Yet, such wide differences in experience between cultures should not surprise us. After all, you might expect a Tlingit to experience some component of “past lives” to be reviewed as part of his or her NDE, whereas you would not expect a Sioux to, as reincarnation isn't part of their culture. It would be the same with a Druze, as opposed to a mainstream Sunni or Reincarnation is a powerful part of Western

New Age belief these days, and it's possible that people who have such reviews are likely to believe in reincarnation to begin with.

Reincarnation believers may be putting far too much faith in these past life reviews. After all, some dreams, especially lucid ones, can seem extremely vivid and real. So can the reports of those people who claim to have OBEs or to astral travel. And, similarly to some NDEs, some report knowledge gathered during the OBE state which is later confirmed. So at least some of these experiences and travels may well be to objectively real places, meeting with equally real people and other beings. They should therefore be accorded at least as much respect as NDEs.

Misinterpreting The Evidence?

The reincarnation school of thought is based largely upon presumptions which may all turn out to be false, by ignoring how the spirit world functions and how its inhabitants interact with our world and always have done. For example, in one of Stevenson's Thai cases, a young boy told how, in a past life, he had been robbed and killed in a distant town. In spirit, he sat for years in a nearby tree, until one day he followed a man home. The man's wife was pregnant and subsequently, the murdered man "reincarnated" as the young boy. However, Susan B Martinez suggests a different possibility, namely that the child was obsessed by that spirit, rendered earthbound by his violent death. In fact, as Susan B Martinez points out,

*'Stevenson's many anecdotes, rather than proving reincarnation, actually document the typical stunts of entities lingering on the earthly plane.'*¹⁴

Martin cites a similar case, in which

'The reincarnated entity had been attacked in his home by thieves, bound hand and foot with wire, and left to die. He floated out of his

*body and drifted around the neighborhood until he stumbled upon an opportunity to be reborn. He entered a fetus in his future mother's womb and never encountered a tunnel or saw a light. In his new life, he had birthmarks on his wrists and ankles where his hands and feet had been bound.'*¹⁵

Note that in the cases just cited, not only is the NDE absent- as Martin acknowledges- but so too is the LBL: there are no Guides, no planning of the next life, no relatives to reunite with, in sharp contrast to Michael Newton's accounts. There's just a solitary spirit sitting and waiting, I would suggest, for a new baby to obsess. As Wickland emphasized,

*'It is... of particular relevance that the majority of these intelligences are oblivious of their transition [death]. They are spirits, and they are loath to recognize the fact.'*¹⁶

Tellingly, Newton even refers to those souls he asserts to be reincarnated as 'earthbound souls'¹⁷ Other spirits may be simply too young to realize what is going on, as with Jasbir Jat - a lonely little spirit expropriated from his body, while Sobha Ram's spirit occupied it. As Blake explains, in such cases it may be that

*'When a strong believer in reincarnation dies and becomes a discarnate personality it will attach itself to a pregnant woman in the mistaken belief it can reincarnate...the fetus, being at the most impressionable stage of its development, can be impressed with birthmarks and defects by the discarnate personality, probably via the mother as maternal impressions.'*¹⁸

Thus, in the first place, we have the reincarnation culture. In the second, we have already seen the evidence from past and present for stigmata-like birthmarks.

Prior Belief A Strong Factor In PLR

Expectancy accounts for so much in matters of the mind, as research has revealed. And belief in reincarnation is no exception. In a major study, psychologist Robert Baker divided sixty students into three groups.

'He told the first group that they were about to experience an exciting new Regression that could... uncover their past lives. 85% in this group were successful in "remembering" a past life. He told the second group that they were to learn about a Regression which may or may not work to engender past-life memories. In this group, the success rate was 60%. He told the third group that the Regression was crazy and that normal people generally do not experience a past life. Only 10% of this group had a past-life "memory" '19

HypnoRegression can likewise be used to plant false memories in believers, as we shall see in Chapter 15. Other studies suggest that "past lives" may be false memories, with the hypnotic method itself rendering the subject more susceptible to the "memories" being implanted. Thus,

'40% of hypnotizable subjects described new identities and used different names when given a suggestion to regress past their birth... Descriptions of alleged past lives were found to be extremely elaborate, with vivid, detailed descriptions... patients demonstrated that the expectations conveyed by the experimenter were most important in determining the characteristics of the reported memories...past lives are not memories, but actually social constructions based on patients acting "as if" they were someone else, but with significant flaws that would not be expected of actual memories. '20

Small wonder, then that Ian Stevenson himself warned against using hypnosis to discover past lives. Recall also that he likewise admonished about its possible dangers, which indeed have been shown to be well-founded.

NOTES

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12. Cultures Disagree Over The “Rules” Of Reincarnation

To many believers, reincarnation is an objective and universal phenomenon. It is remarkable therefore how closely the reported cases of past lives follow the norms of the culture in which they arise.

They Disagree On What Gender You Will Be.

Ian Stevenson tells of how

‘The proportion of (sex change) cases varies greatly among cultures... When I questioned the informants in countries where sex-change cases occur, they told me that sex-change from one life to another is possible, but when I questioned the informants of cultures where such cases do not occur, they told me it is impossible’¹

The Druze of the Middle East are among those who believe that men are only reincarnated as men, women only as women. This situation would present a sticky problem for Hindu women, as a common belief among Hindus is that a woman must first reincarnate as a man, in order to have any chance at all of escaping the wheel of rebirth! Carl Wickman’s work also seems highly problematic for the Druze model, as in the following exchange.

Dr. You have been in darkness forty years.

Spirit. Sometimes I have been a man, sometimes a lady.²

and this:

Dr. You have been obsessing people.

Spirit. Sometimes I am a man and sometimes a girl.³

They Disagree On What Race You Will Be

It is likewise with ethnicity. Genevieve Paulson wrote *'In our many lifetimes we will experience all races.'*⁴

However, what race you will be born into seems to depend mostly upon your cultural beliefs. Thus the Tlingit people of Alaska and North-West Canada hold to the belief that *'All Tlingits are reincarnates of an ancestor.'*⁵ Why have these ideas persisted that long in these societies, maybe for 10,000 years? The answer is likely to be isolation from other influences: some of these tribes live in very remote areas. We can even see this effect in why Judaism has lasted so long. The answer is that the Jews have generally kept their religion to themselves, even while living among the Gentiles, which was a form of isolationism (often enforced upon them).

Reincarnation v. No Reincarnation

Other North-Western Native American tribes likewise have reincarnation beliefs, as do the Inuit people. However, other Native American tribes do not believe in rebirth. For example, the Sioux, Cherokee, Iroquois and Apache believe in a variety of after-death conditions, some bright and cheerful- what the Whites derisively dubbed the "happy hunting ground"- others more shadowy. Some practiced animism, while others believed in a single Creator, which later contributed to them adopting Christianity.

Karma v. No Karma

Reincarnation belief is understandable, especially among hunter-gatherers like the original Native Americans. These people observed the cycle of nature, especially winter's "rebirth" as spring and ascribed similar to their own soul's possible destiny after

death. However, there is a difference in these tribal versions to that of the Hindus/Buddhists in that there is no concept of Karma. Why? Because there are no pronounced caste or class divisions among tribes to keep people in their place.

They Disagree About The Time Spent Between Incarnations

If a culture believes there is no gap between incarnations, no gap is reported. Again, in Ian Stevenson's own words, the Druze believe that

*'When a physical body dies its soul becomes immediately attached to a newly born physical body, that is, to the body of an infant just delivered to its mother. The Druze acknowledge no exceptions to this rule.'*⁶

Generally, the Druze do not even have time for a funeral before they are reborn! But even this notion of immediate reincarnation gets compromised. Dwalry's study of the Druze revealed that

*'None of the subjects was born on the same date on which they died in their past life. The difference between the two dates ranged from one month to two years. Interestingly, this issue did not cast doubt on the match between the subjects and their past lives.'*⁷

Basic

Again we see the muddled nature of even basic tenets regarding reincarnation. Gaps between incarnations differ wildly. Thus, a young boy reported to be speaking a 2,500 year old Chinese dialect⁸ was held as an example of reincarnation: one hell of a between-life intermission! However, theosophist F Milton Willis goes one better with a proposed gap between lives of no less than 10,000 years!⁹ Yet this conflicts with Madame Blavatsky who estimated the gap as between 1000 and 1500 years.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Bhagavad-Gita merely suggests an "immensity of years".¹¹ And we saw the case of the man with chronic backache due to being stabbed in the back and killed on

a medieval battlefield. Even if we give a date of 1500 CE at the latest for this battle, that's still well over 500 years between incarnations.

Plausible

At the other end of the scale Zen master Roshi Yasutani suggests 6/7 days between lives¹², Dr Jim Tucker cites anywhere from 6 months to fifty years for his Western subjects between incarnations,¹³ while author A. Stringer in *The Secret Of The Gods* quotes around 130 years.¹⁴ And what of the reports of mediums regarding souls who are earthbound for centuries? Jacob, a spirit, said he was hanged 180 years previously, while John Aird-another English spirit- claimed to have been murdered 466 years before!¹⁵ This is because, as we saw, time passes differently in the afterworld and decades to us may seem like mere weeks or even days to spirits. This suggests, too, that cases of ancient languages being spoken by modern children are quite plausible when spirits speak through them. But aren't some of the languages obsolete? Yes, but so are some spirits! Seriously, this could fairly easily be the work of those spirits who have remained earthbound communicating their familiar tongue when they lived. Supernatural reports are full of ghosts who are centuries old, still haunting the same places, unable to move on.

They Disagree About What Side Of The Family You Will Be

In matriarchal societies, cases of reincarnation are mostly related through the mother. In patriarchal societies, almost the exact opposite is true. Again, to quote Stevenson,

*'Among same-family cases of the Tlingit, I found a distinctive feature... in about 75 percent of the cases they are related on the side of the subject's mother. This accords with the matrilineal organization of the Tlingit society...Among... the Igbo of Nigeria... I have found the opposite... The Igbos have a patrilineal society.'*¹⁶

They Disagree About Where You Will Reside Between Lives.

If a people believes the spirits reside between lives in a "discarnate realm" their children more frequently remember these realms.

Ian Stevenson agrees:

*'Different cultures show marked variations...memories of experiences the subjects claim to have had in a discarnate state.'*¹⁷

Stevenson writes this in a 1987 book, which refutes the idea that Dr Michael Newton "discovered" this discarnate realm in his first book in 1994. Needless to say, in children of the Druze, for whom reincarnation is immediate, no such realm is reported. Their situation would repudiate the following description:

*'The patient reached the point of his death in that past life and proceeded to describe...the transition of the soul after death into the Spirit World and his 'welcome home' by his 'soul-mates' and spirit guide...The outcome was always the same; a clear, coherent, consistent description of the spirit world accompanied by a concise description of the events experienced by souls from death in one life to re-birth in the next.'*¹⁸

Such reports, though, are mainly urban Western ones.

*'Experiences that are recalled usually correspond closely either to the habits of the "previous personality" or to expectations about the content of the afterlife based on the local religious and cultural traditions. Tlingits in Alaska tell of a ride across a lake in a canoe right after death and a subsequent return trip across the same lake just before rebirth. Indians, on the other hand, recall meetings with Krishna or Lakshmi.'*¹⁹

Announcing It... Or Not

But what about announcing dreams, whereby a spirit foretells psychically its intention to incarnate? Does this factor fit into the spirit obsession/ possession model? The answer is that, again, this is a cultural factor, not a universal one. For example, among the Druze, who believe reincarnation is instantaneous(i.e. with no LBL) no such announcing dreams are present, as Ian Stevenson himself acknowledged ²⁰. Besides, where they do take place, the spirit obsession model remains unaffected, because the spirit endeavoring to reincarnate may simply be announcing its intentions psychically. In some cases the spirit may be so entangled in the aura of the child, that it believes that it *has* physically reincarnated (see Chapter 5). But this does not mean that *actual* reincarnation takes place.

And even among Westerners, when Virginia Tighe as Bridey Murphy was quizzed via hypnosis regarding the between-life state, which, presumably, lasted from Bridey's death in 1864 to Virginia's birth in 1923- her report of '*a drab and altogether miserable place* ²¹ is very different to the welcoming scenario just described. Neither was there any reference to anyone else choosing Bridey's new body as Virginia, again disagreeing with Newton and other reports of the between-life state. Of course, the Druze, have no LBL, drab or otherwise.

They Even Disagree On What Species You Can Be

There is, too, a wide gulf between cultures regarding possible promotion and relegation to higher and lower species.

*'Unlike the Hindu or Buddhist, who believes that souls may be transmitted to any living creature, Druze believe that the human soul can be transmitted only to another human being .'*²²

This Druze position, if the correct one, raises particular problems for reincarnation, -i. e. that of the population growth problem, as we shall

see in the next chapter. Generally, then, it is easy to sympathize with the skeptic's view that

*'Reincarnations appear to coincide with the cultural beliefs of the society in which they are reported.. these are indications that the children and/or the adults observing them are (knowingly or subconsciously), applying their pre-learned cultural beliefs to make the stories fit.'*²³

They Disagree Over In-Family Rebirth

While the Tlingits of Alaska are reborn within the same family- as well as the same tribe- almost all Asian Indian cases are reborn outside it.²⁴ But why should the conditions of rebirth conform to a person's cultural beliefs? Again, the idea of earthbound spirits, rather than reincarnation, seems the best explanation. As Marty Spiller explains,

*'Cultural beliefs affect the dead as well as the living. The spirits of the dead naturally behave according to the beliefs of their culture, and if the cultural beliefs involve reincarnation into the same family that is just what a recently deceased soul from that culture is likely to try to do.'*²⁵

They Disagree On Whether You Have A Self Or Not

Whereas Hindus believe in an essential Self (a.k.a the *atman*), Buddhists reject the doctrine, believing instead that we are merely a stream of consciousness, even though *'If there are no selves, then no self can be reincarnated as another self!'*²⁶

We can see in practice how this disparity might work out between cultures. For example, Hindus Jasbir Jat, Sobha Ram and the holy man were still individual "selves" on the astral plane (Chapter 2). In contrast, Thais and Burmese (Buddhists) are offered a "fruit of "forgetfulness" to wipe memories of both their former lives and the LBL. Those who do remember the LBL have disobeyed the

command.²⁷ This factor, however, could just be an elaborate story to convey the “stream of consciousness” idea.

Here, it might be amusing to return briefly to Chapter 11 and individuals. Should we now surmise that Michael Newton’s 7,000 clients disobeyed the order to eat the “fruit of forgetfulness”, but conversely, every one of Joe Keeton’s 9,000 clients obeyed the order and ate the fruit? Surely Keeton’s clients weren’t all Buddhists!

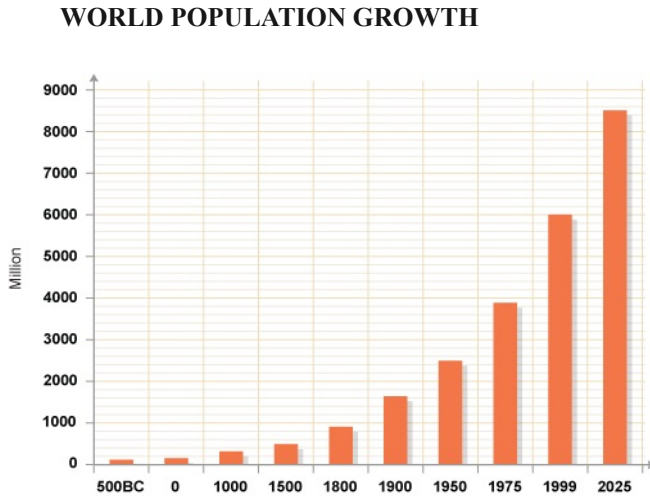
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13. The Population Problem

Look at the following graph:



At more than 8 billion people, there are now living on planet Earth approximately

TWICE as many people as in 1975.

THREE times more people than in 1950.

TEN times more people than in 1750.

TWENTY times more people than in 1400.

FORTY times more people than in 1 CE (Jesus's time)

A HUNDRED times more people than at the time of the Pharaohs.

All these people, presumably, have, or have had, souls. Thus, because population growth is always expanding there will always be more

bodies than there are souls to reincarnate into them. So, where are all these souls coming from? To make up for these glaring differentials, reincarnation believers are forced to devise other strategies to address this shortfall. One way is to appeal to the vast amount of humans who have lived through the whole of history. Thus, roughly 100 billion people are thought to have lived through the ages, so surely that's more than enough to cover the current world population of 8 billion as regards available souls for reincarnation?

Same Difference

Well, actually, no. It doesn't matter how many people are involved, because world population is always increasing exponentially, even allowing for major disasters such as the Black Death which decimated Europe. Some reincarnationists point to the possibility of previous human civilizations which have been periodically wiped out by natural disasters. But you would still be left with the first civilization's lack of souls from its onset to its demise, when the population must still have grown progressively. Anyway, suppose the population decreased drastically, would you then have souls "waiting in the wings" for bodies? Otherwise, in the case of population growth you have too many bodies for existing souls and in a decrease you would have too many souls for available bodies. Additionally, even today with "only" 8 billion people, evidence claimed as past lives is numbered only in the low thousands. That hardly constitutes a solid foundation for belief in rebirth.

Balancing The Arithmetic

Another strategy is to bring in animals. If animals can potentially change to human form, and vice versa, would we then have no issue with the population arithmetic? But, as Michael Newton supporter, Richard Martini, stresses '*Humans only incarnate as humans. Animals only incarnate as animals. They don't mix.*'¹

This echoes St. Ambrose of Milan, who, as long ago as the 4th century CE, protested

'It would be impossible that the soul which rules man should take on itself the nature of a beast so opposed to that of man, or that man, being capable of reason should be able to pass over to an irrational animal.' ²

In other words, the migration of souls between human and animals is as impossible as the procreation of bodies between humans and animals (though we should, of course, always respect our animal cousins). Involving the animal kingdom in reincarnation has been a traditional tenet of Hinduism. Yet this a most unlikely solution: our nearest relatives, the great apes, are far fewer in number than us and there wouldn't have been nearly enough souls to upgrade even in times before mankind drove some of them-such as the gorillas and orangutans- to the edge of extinction. Anyway, animals are mostly governed by instinct and are thus not morally responsible for their actions as humans are. This rules out the possibility of improving Karma in order to access the human realm again (see Chapter 29). And conversely, if a human becomes an animal in their next incarnation, owing to bad Karma, then the dye would be cast forever.

Another problem for reincarnation is that mediums have frequently reported spirits being accompanied by their beloved pets, and some of these spirits lived centuries ago. For example, vicar Charles Tweedale writes of being visited by the spirit of famed violin maker, Antonio Stradivarius, whose pet cat had been with him since at least 1737, when the master himself died. (incidentally, Stradivarius mentioned nothing of reincarnation and Tweedale, a Christian Spiritualist quotes another spirit who denies the doctrine altogether ³). In any case, reincarnation therefore cannot be instantaneous.

Fanciful

But, the reincarnation believer might argue, we can bring in other worlds and realities, even other times, especially the future, such as ‘concurrent and multiple reincarnation’, the Kabbalist “cycle of souls”, even the exotically named “Lurian multi-tiered soul”- a sort of “oversoul”.⁴ Might this even explain how Jasbir Jat and Sobha Ram were alive at the same time yet one was identifying as having lived as the other? Doesn’t it also depend on our conception of time? The vast majority of reincarnations are sequential in linear time but maybe that doesn’t preclude other time relations between them? However, such explanations seem to be merely clutching at straws in order to excuse the shortcomings in reincarnation theory, while needing to become ever more imaginative in the process. As Barry L Beyerstein notes,

‘If the souls of every one of today’s earthlings necessarily inhabited a body in a previous generation and-also according to doctrine-no new souls are being created, and there were fewer bodies on the planet then than now, we would appear to be faced with a serious soul deficit. A few reincarnationists have attempted to sidestep this impediment with mind-numbing ad hoc gyrations (upgrading of animal souls, recruiting souls from other planets or dimensions, soul-sharing, etc.), but the extremes to which these apologists have gone only underscores...how fanciful the whole reincarnation enterprise really is.’⁵

Besides, even if we factored in other realities, exactly the same problem would occur, with population increasing exponentially, as ours does. As Damien Althorpe asks

‘Where are the souls replacing the migrating souls coming from? Wouldn’t there have to be new souls entering in?’⁶

And why would space people, who would be more evolved than we are, be subject to the demotion by Karma that would be

required to incarnate on our backward planet? Such advanced beings would not incur Karma either, as they are likely to have every amenity. Likewise, surely time travelers from the future would already know the outcome of any lifetime, without having to physically live it? And why is it that most past life cases occur predominantly in cultures which already espouse reincarnation? After both World Wars, particularly WW2 which killed 30-80 million civilians as well as servicemen, society should have been rife with such reports from children born just after. But I don't recall a single case among my school friends. Why? Because it wasn't a reincarnation culture. It's the same reason as to why you only get visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Roman Catholic countries. Thus, though many spirits may have been earthbound owing to their violent deaths, evidently they weren't waiting to reincarnate.

Insurmountable

And we saw already, in Chapter 4, the insurmountable difficulties that rule out the notion of 'multi-tiered' or "split souls". And while thousands of cases have now been studied among those cultures, we mustn't forget that India and the Far East have had *millions* die since the 1950s. And, if we return to Wickland's findings, then there is a solid reason why reincarnation cultures will inevitably provide memories of past lives in far greater numbers than non-reincarnation ones. It is simply because in places like India, there are more spirits that are earthbound through trying to reincarnate, and likewise more children that are victims of these spirits.

And what about the thousands of cases documented by Spiritualists-especially at its height in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when spirits were communicating all the time of living on in spirit rather than being reborn? And what of the "Dark Realms" of the afterworld (see Chapter 16), where seriously bad offenders are detained: most of these would be glad to escape into reincarnation! Moreover, if these suggested multi-tiered, concurrent and multiple incarnations were true, we would expect to hear the number of reincarnation reports

positively overflowing. Yet, somehow, there remain still so few examples and, of these, much the greater part is confined to cultures that already accept reincarnation. We saw already, too, that there are spirits with 3,000 years between incarnations, whether communicating directly or via a subject speaking an archaic language. How can such long LBL epochs possibly be compatible with population growth?

I submit that the only concurrent entities are the mortal body and the spirit body, which every person has. When the mortal body dies, the spirit body discards it. Moreover, time and eternity are incompatible realms of existence. Those in the spirit world can predict the future because, in their world, past, future and present are all one, so the idea of a spirit coming back from the future is meaningless. Only mortal, time-bound bodies have a future. It is understandable that reincarnation believers cling so tightly to their doctrine, because many see any denial of it as tantamount to annihilation, when nothing could be further from the truth. The spirit body, in fact, is forever.

Beam Me Back Up...!

Nevertheless, Martini seems to have soaked up all these past life reports of exotic locations from those under hypnosis:

*'Former loved ones who we normally incarnate with... claim that this isn't the "only rodeo" - there are other planets, other universes, other realms to incarnate in - but again, we'd have to get our loved ones and pals to sign off on that trip... Can people refuse to incarnate? Apparently so - they can and do say "pass" or "no thanks" or "I did that lifetime in the Viking era and I didn't like playing your drunk uncle, so I'm gonna pass.'*⁷

However, by sitting it out in this way, and not reincarnating, the pool of available souls is still further reduced. Confusing and contradictory, if you ask me. PLR practitioner, Irina Nola, cites such

stellar interchanges, who are also exempt from the messy planning of each Earth life they undertake:

*'I get a lot of extra-terrestrial beings living in human bodies... they die, exit the human body and see a spaceship waiting for them, or go straight through stars to their home world. Sometimes they do not even have to die - they are taken by their own people.'*⁸

Hmm. I bet you wouldn't have found many such reports in the days before the Space Age. Even Michael Newton seems to have gotten in on the act, as one blogger observes:

*'In the second book, it just goes completely off the deep end....talking about a soul who is called Scanlon from the planet Jasper where there are horse-like creatures...'*⁹

We have 'horse-like' creatures on Earth, also. They're called horses. Seriously, though, are these creatures some hybrid human-animal souls to fill the gaps in souls we saw earlier? Apparently, these space beings seem to have quite some range of incarnations they will choose. Nola's and Newton's subjects above were clearly affluent enough to live in the West and be able to afford expensive hypnotherapy sessions, while others have a weird predilection for the choice of body they will enter here on Earth. In fact, as Edwards observes,

*'Most of them preferring to enter the wombs of mothers in poor and over-populated countries where their lives are likely to be wretched.'*¹⁰

As for involving higher spiritual worlds, unless such beings are truly selfless *bhodisattvas* why ever would they want to descend *en masse* to this world of pain, inequality and comparatively primitive technology? These "solutions" are merely attempts to square an ever-growing human population with the implications for reincarnation belief. Certainly the emphasis by certain cultures on rapid rebirth,

race and lineage we have seen does not help the believer in rebirth. And neither does the opposite view of Blavatsky- while on Earth- or F Milton Willis with their insistence on thousands of years in the between-life state which, again, is not conducive to most theories of the wait between births.

The First-Timers Problem

Jim Tucker addressed the population problem by suggesting that certain people have past lives, while others are first-timers on Earth.¹¹ But, as Susan Martinez reasons,

*'Doesn't that imply that the first-timers have their own soul? Of course it does... So, exactly what soul inhabits the "nots"? It would be their own natural spirit. And it follows that that natural spirit must be pushed out or replaced when a reincarnater comes along for a brand-new life in flesh.'*¹²

Problems With Guides and Guardian Angels

In his book, *Afterlife*, Stephen Hawley Martin tells of a 16 year old named Thomas who encountered his Guides in the form of 'string-like flickering light beings'. When Thomas asked what these guides do, he recalls

*'They went on to give a beautiful and quite comforting explanation. They said everyone—all living people—have guides. Guides are souls who sign on to facilitate the development of those of us who are embodied.'*¹³

One must wonder about the demographics of all this. Not only do we have the problem with population growth as outlined previously, we now have the added influx of guides for every soul on earth just to compound the problem! And are these guides the same as "guardian angels" because, if not, we have yet another vast layer of entities who are supposed to look out for us mortals. Sadly, for all this multitude of

such beings, they really don't seem to be doing much at all to help those billions on this planet who face a daily struggle merely to avoid starvation, to obtain work or to find somewhere to live. And you have to ask what all these guides and angels were doing during the Holocaust, the Black Death or the Witchhunts across Europe. Where were they at Dresden and Hiroshima, or the Tsunami of 2004? If one claims they are administering Karma then, as we have seen, this is incompatible with choice regarding what sort of life one will live (see Chapter 9).

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14. The Identity Problem

Michael Shermer stressed the difficulty of reconciling a past soul with a present body, when debating Deepak Chopra on the well-known James Leininger case (see also Chapter 20):

‘When I asked what had happened to little James Leininger’s soul if his body is now occupied by the soul of a World War 2 fighter pilot, Chopra offered this jewel of Deepakese... “What you call a person actually is a pattern of behavior of a universal consciousness.” Indicating our host, he continued, “There is no such thing as Jeff, because what we call Jeff is a constantly transforming consciousness that appears as a certain personality.. mind... ego...body....we had a different Jeff when you were a teenager.... when you were a baby. Which one of you is the real Jeff?” Jeff looked as confused as I felt.’¹

But the fact is that Jeff, whatever his stage of development, always still occupied only one body with one identity. Does Chopra likewise think that a butterfly is not the same individual creature as the caterpillar or cocoon that it once was? As for imposing a reincarnation narrative upon a young child, it could actually be classed as child abuse. Brian Dunning called it *‘Psychologically outrageous to take away a toddler’s individuality and teach him he’s someone else.’²*

It is remarkable that David Icke who can write, in one place, *‘If I didn’t reincarnate, where would I go? Heaven is an Illusion, Hell is an illusion.’³* can nevertheless title one of his books, *I Am Me, I Am Free*. Er, exactly who *are* you then, David? (That said, I find Icke’s “global conspiracy” theory both courageous and thought-provoking) Moreover, unique individuality is actually the polar opposite of reincarnation, as reincarnation requires the same soul or spirit to undergo numerous changes of personality, even of gender and race, in often vastly different historical periods and/or places, depending on which version of the doctrine the believer accepts. James Webster

highlights this uniqueness of each person – apart from severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia or DID(MPD)- and how bewildering is the notion of the often extreme transformation whole personality, that would require

*'The same soul incarnating successively as a dwarf, a philosopher, a prostitute, a sea captain, a dog fancier; a mathematician and a mother of ten... On the contrary, every man and woman we meet is first and foremost a distinct person, however manifold and intricate his characteristics.'*⁴

Likewise, what the reader must ask themselves is this: if you think you have reincarnated, then who are *you*? And who is the soul you have replaced to get into the body you now inhabit? And where is *their* soul? The truth is, there is always one soul too many.

More Problems With DID (MPD)

Regarding such psychological diseases, Martinez asks how reincarnation could cope with the special and alarming problems raised by the phenomenon of DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder) which involves sometimes a multitude of totally and perceptibly different personalities all encroaching one host body: sometimes nearly a hundred! ⁵Or the ultimate in spirit obsession? The identity of the sufferer is indeed 'dissociated' from its true self. I also think that the former name for DID -which was MPD (Multiple Personality Disorder)- described the victim's situation more accurately, Moreover, the patient actually being buried under an avalanche of freeloading spiritual entities would also explain the otherwise baffling mystery of how

'Alternate personalities can sometimes show very different biological characteristics from the host and from each other. Several personalities sharing one body may have different heartrates, blood

*pressures, body temperatures, pain tolerances, and eyesight abilities. Different alters may have unique reactions to medications. Sometimes a healthy host can have alternate personalities with allergies and even asthma.'*⁶

Remember also, that the problem is even worse for the reincarnation school of thought. As we saw in the last chapter, there are enough problems posed by a “one body, one soul” scenario, without more souls crowding into one body!

The Mind-Body Problem

Barry Beyerstein adds a neuroscientist’s perspective to the idea of souls transmigrating from one body to another, while at the same time confirming the unique personhood of every patient during his medical career:

*'The manifest dependence of all mental functions on specific brain functions makes the possibility that personal traits, knowledge, or self-awareness could skip from one incarnation to the next exceedingly remote... if this kind of transmigration of traits and knowledge is possible, my entire chosen field of behavioral neuroscience is essentially a fool's errand.'*⁷

The Barrier To Higher Worlds

However, I think the weight of the evidence shows that, when we die, *another* body awaits all of us, i.e. the spirit body and the infinite possibilities that this transition will bring. But rather than surrendering to this inevitable yet natural transition, it is the clinging to the familiar Earth that feeds the urge to be reborn. This world does indeed have a meaning and purpose, namely to develop and prepare us for the next one: the process of individualization. This is the true meaning of life, not the opposite, repetitious cycle of fragmentation, in constantly entering and exiting this human stage, as required by

reincarnation. And what is it that makes people afraid to make the inevitable leap to the other side?

*'The Small Ego lurks behind the vast majority of intentions to reincarnate.... in its neediness of "I am not enough" it will wish for another go-round on Earth...to "add" something to to "complete" themselves... because, in their "distorted" view of life... they are not enough, not yet perfect, not yet whole.... This personal existential vacuum, a feeling of great worthlessness, causes them to believe that much time is required to make themselves a finished product. ..These wishes will not be honored.'*⁸

Experience

Not every spirit in the universe has had to undergo life such as on our Earth. Yet it is this worldly experience that strengthens us and develops our character. And this is another reason why one Earth life is sufficient. Thus *'One gets on better, having had Earth experience'*.⁹ A communicating spirit during The Scole Experiment confirmed this situation, this uniqueness of earthly life. As the subjects on the earth side relate,

*'The difference between us and spirit beings is that we are shrouded in physical form for a short time in order to have certain experiences which would not be possible in spirit form. When the experience is over, we discard the vehicle... and go home...this... does not preclude choice about our own individual experience. A very interesting point raised during the experiments was that each individual mind had total freedom of choice as to the content of the message it sent during the sessions.'*¹⁰

As to David Icke's belief that everything is an illusion, that is because ours is not the *real*, spiritual world:

*'According to the ancients, this whole world is just illusory, the dream from which death awakens us.'*¹¹

The departed spirit of an acquaintance, Dr Hodgson, emphasized to James Hyslop, the pronounced difference between his spiritual world and the frail and transient nature of ours:

*'Remember, we share, and always will have, our friends in the dream-life, that is, your life so to speak.'*¹²

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15. False Memories

We saw earlier with cryptomnesia (confabulation) how the human imagination is almost unlimited- truly an inner universe. Yet this ability of the mind can also present problems for the regressed subject, as outlined by Ian Stevenson in Chapter 1. The related phenomenon of False Memory Syndrome is perhaps even more pernicious, as, together with problems for the subject's mental health, it can drag other people into the fantasy, too, sometimes with devastating results. In the hands of a hypnotist, "victims" truly believe and "re-live" their false experiences. Much has now been revealed regarding hypnotic regression and the damage that False Memory Syndrome can do to both the subject and those around them, even close relatives.

Children are at particular risk. For example, the suggestion of serial sexual abuse among children in Orkney, Scotland, in the early 1990s almost resulted in completely innocent parents being convicted, so convincing was the "evidence". In this case, "memories" of Satanic rituals had been retrieved from children under hypnosis. Thankfully, common sense prevailed in the end after witnesses for the defense affirmed that the small island at the center of the allegations, South Ronaldsay, was too flat and barren for the alleged torchlit open air rituals not to have been easily seen from the islanders' cottages. The upside of this case was that it resulted in testimonies produced under hypnosis alone being no longer allowed in UK courts, with other countries following suit.

In the USA, the problem was even worse, involving allegations of ritualistic abuse of children- the situation compounded by religious zealotry. There, the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit dismissed such claims for utter lack of evidence:

'If such cults existed there would be tens of thousands of bodies of mutilated babies buried around the land. Not one has been found. The Salt Lake Tribune...reported that a Utah task force spent \$250,000 trying to find evidence of Satanic ritual abuse. It found

*nothing. How do fundamentalists explain this? Satan is so powerful, they argue, that he obliterates all evidence!*¹

This, of course, is not to say that such rituals and even child sacrifice do not go on. Even as I write this, a movie based on Satanism and child-trafficking in high places, is doing very well at the box-offices and may lead to convictions.

Absurd

However, some of the scenarios evoked by HypnoRegression are plainly absurd, and would strain the credulity of all but the most extreme believers. For example in one case, a hypnotized boy “recalled” that his adult abuser had taken himself and a group of other children aboard a ship which was surrounded by sharks. The adult had then thrown a girl into the ocean. The girl was not eaten by the sharks however, for the boy himself jumped in and rescued her! Other children in the group reported the abuser sodomizing them and shooting babies with a pistol. The abuser’s *piece de resistance*, however, was to regularly send children into outer space in rockets!² It is hard to believe that otherwise intelligent adults- the therapists, the authorities, and, ultimately, the juries- could ever have been taken in by such tales exhibiting all the hysteria of Salem, 1692. It’s as if these people were themselves under a form of hypnosis! What is so disturbing, and indeed so Important for this present book, is that it illustrates just how convincing false memories can be, both for the listener and the subject undergoing them. And worse still,

‘To this day the children, now young adults, swear their revived memories are genuine. “We know. We were there,” they have said many times on TV talk shows....The cases described only scratch the surface of nightmares...splintering families all over the U.S. and Canada and sending innocent adults to prison for life.’³

Small wonder, then, that reincarnation believers can “know” irrefutably that they have lived before.

Prolonged

Another important element is that these memories of abuse only began to manifest in the children *after* they had undergone hypnosis:

*'None of the children had told anyone about their abuse until undergoing Regression...When the children were first interviewed by therapists they had no memories of sex abuse, but after prolonged Regression, and hundreds of leading questions, memories of abuse began to emerge.'*⁴

And even with adults, the mind's repository of suppressed "memories" is ever accessible and merely awaiting excavation via hypnosis to penetrate its deepest and darkest corners, until the flashlight of science and common sense are allowed to prevail. For example, Laura Paisley, a 39 year old Dallas PD secretary sought Regression therapy upon being told that her bulimia, like all eating disorders, emanated from the murky reservoir of child sex abuse. Hypnosis and dream analysis, revealed that she had been abused by her mother, father, grandfather, and neighbor, no less, and that the sexual abuse even involved animals. Happily, Laura was canny enough to eventually reject these findings and both her counselor and therapist agreed a payout to avoid a law suit.⁵

Susceptibility

But are such notions a million miles from the idea that a person suffers from a painful condition because of being wounded or injured in a past life? Or that someone experiences misfortune because of bad Karma? Or that, to Scientologists, personality defects are due to an "engram" formed in a past life, that must be "audited" to enable the subject to become a "clear" in this incarnation? Psychologist Chris French writes

'Numerous experiments have shown that is much easier than anyone might have supposed to implant false memories in a large minority of

*the population. Reliable experimental procedures have been developed to study susceptibility to false memories.'*⁶

As to the popular idea of repression, as conceptualized by Freud, the indications in fact point to the *opposite* process:

*'The evidence strongly suggests that, far from being unable to remember sexual abuse, victims typically find it all too difficult to keep such memories out of their consciousness.'*⁷

This fact seriously compromises the idea of PLR as a memory of a previous life. For, we would then be expected to believe that that the client- such as the man with the back pain cited earlier as the result of a "past life" - has been able to repress such a memory well into adulthood. Sure, the therapist is attempting to extract some deep rooted memory believed to be the source of the client's present-life problems, but the evidence suggests that the solution arrived at by regression- i.e. the "memory" unearthed- is not an event in the patient's life at all. And, crucially, this same process may be applied to past-life events also. It is therefore possible to see parallels between false memories in this life and those involving past life memories evoked during hypnotherapy. This is because

*'The conditions typically found in the psychotherapeutic context fit the bill perfectly. Specifically, a vulnerable individual being informed by the therapist, an authority figure, that their current psychological symptoms strongly indicate that they must have been abused as children even if they can no longer remember the abuse due to repression. Once this has been accepted by the client, they are encouraged to engage in a range of mental exercises to "recover" these memories, but which in fact are highly likely to result in the formation of false memories.'*⁸

Vulnerable

It is therefore easy to see how children, in particular, might be susceptible to such false memories. This is because a child is particularly vulnerable to real-life harm:

*'It is not surprising that many people find it easy to believe that when apparent memories of childhood abuse are reported for the first time during psychoRegression, they probably are based upon events which did take place. After all, we know that such abuse really does take place with alarming frequency and can sometimes have devastating effects upon the victims.'*⁹

At this point, it may be asked whether this inability to suppress traumatic events then make a young child's similar "past-life memories" feasible – even compromising the idea of spirit influence? I believe the answer is no, because, as we have seen, the "past-life" memories of child subjects are very different. Here, the trauma and disturbance is evident from the onset of spirit influence or obsession, namely, a major change in the child's previous demeanor and/or personality. This onset is pronounced and obvious, with the child "becoming" the obsessing spirit, to the extent of announcing its new-found identity in the first person.

Moreover, the child dramatically returns to normal whenever an obsessing spirit has been identified, and then "exorcised" from the victim's magnetic aura, where it had possibly been trapped. Then, ultimately, the child forgets such memories. This is also a natural feature of the child's maturing from the *theta* brain state, together with the strengthening of its independent ego and its will. However, the willingness of adults to conclude, in cases involving children, that the memories dredged up in therapy are actual historical ones, is understandable. And it is this vulnerability in young children that might, in turn, give credence to the possibility that hypnotically-induced memories of past lives also have a basis in reality,

Parallels

However, there is a similar stimulus- in this case, the suggestion that the child's memories might be of a past life- enhanced by the authority figure of the hypnotherapist, the parents and/or other adults, that gives rise to the conclusion, i.e rebirth. But, if a spirit is obsessing a child from its earliest entrance into the world, why is there a time lapse of 2-3 years before the child begins speaking of its past life (or, in my interpretation, the obsessing spirit's own memories)? The answer is simply that a young infant is not able to verbalize the thoughts in its head and has therefore to wait until it has at least learned to speak. Nevertheless, there still exist notable parallels between the regressed subject-child or adult-whether this involves sordid "memories" of the present life or of a constructed "past life". And these similarities illustrate the power of the mind, the power of suggestion and the power of belief.

NOTES

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2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*
6. French, Chris 'Families are still living the nightmare of false memories of sexual abuse'
The Guardian 8/4/2009
7. *ibid.*
8. *ibid.*
9. *ibid.*

16. How Spiritualism Contradicts Reincarnation

The wide range of phenomena known to Spiritualists present further problems for reincarnation belief. For example:

1. *Reincarnation cannot explain how temple mediums are able to invoke the spirits of the departed.*
2. *If the spirit of the departed has already reincarnated into another body, how can it also appear in the temple medium?*¹

Reincarnation junkies would undoubtedly appeal to long LBLs, but, as we saw earlier, Joe Keeton's findings (Chapter 11) and the Druze culture (Chapter 12) could not accommodate such a scenario, nor would providing souls for population requirements (Chapter 13). In fact, 19th century Spiritualists were so adept at locating the departed that William Howitt, an English Spiritualist, could declare

*'Thousands in the Other World protest, through distinguished mediums, that they have no knowledge or proofs of reincarnation...If reincarnation be true...there must have been millions of spirits, who, upon entering the other world, have sought in vain their kindred, children and friends. Has one whisper of such a woe ever reached us from the tens of thousands of communicating spirits? Never! We may, therefore, on this ground alone, pronounce the dogma of Reincarnation false as the hell from which it sprung.'*²

And there is another, thoroughly practical, approach to the problem:

'How ridiculous it would be to hear a medium from the platform say, 'I am sorry dear, but your mom can't be here to greet you this evening because she has taken another body and is back on the earth.' Neither I nor anyone I know has ever heard anything like that, and the reason is because they are all there. If reincarnation were true, it would

*mean no joyous reunion with loved ones because everyone would be popping up and down from one world to the other.'*³

Consequences

Some people who believe in reincarnation do so because of the connection with Karma and the sense of justice attached to that doctrine. As we shall see (Chapter 29) there are serious problems with Karma. But in any case, major felons who die without being caught for their crimes will not escape justice. There are planes of existence beyond this one where retribution is meted out. These planes are close to the earth and vary in their degrees of unpleasantness in proportion to the gravity of the spirit's offenses in its earth life. However, the existence of such places is also incompatible with reincarnation:

*'If reincarnation is true, why would there be the Dark Realms?... Thousands of mediumistic testimonies are offered to us...accounts of the Spirit Guides' ...missionary work there, an effort to bring confused and wayward persons to their senses...The Dark realms would be emptied instantly by those, in a spirit of "cheap grace," with a "get out of jail free card," who would cavalierly exult that they might now try again, easily casting off past consequences for actions...It doesn't work that way.'*⁴

Some of these planes are described as dark, hellish even. Yet, even these dark regions are not permanent, or at least need not be. Rather, the duration of the offending spirit's incarceration in these regions depends upon its willingness to repent and reform itself, thereby enabling it to ascend up the planes. But it is not just such negative aspects of our spiritual progress which would be compromised by reincarnation. We can go further still and reveal the ultimate stumbling block. not only to much New Age thought, but to the established religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism:

'If a soul had to repeatedly reincarnate over and over again, there would be no real need for a spiritual world at all since all spiritual

evolution would have to take place on the earth. Why bother with a spiritual Heaven or Hell if both conditions had to be experienced again and again right here in the world of matter?’⁵

Why Spirits Disagree

However, it remains a fact that, through mediums, some spirits teach reincarnation while others deny it. But why? This may be because

‘Spirits ... continue to hold for a long period the same ideas about spiritual things which they embraced on earth...they are apparently just as liable to be inculcated with new, and perhaps misleading, doctrines as they were in the body. The conditions in the “spirit spheres” appear to be much the same as on earth: all possible opinions, enlightened and unenlightened, have their eager representatives.’⁶

There is, as well, a strong tendency for “birds of a feather“ to flock together. Andrew Jackson Davis, the celebrated 19th century mystic and teacher, spoke of

‘A wild-west commotion.. “brotherhoods” dominating the lower sectors of Summerland... groups representing... every religious sect...some of these groups go back thousands of years... Gnostics...Egyptian mystery cults...ancient Greece, Babylon...the American Indian...Australian Bushman. New-Agers...Pythagoreans... Platonists... groups promoting atheism, polytheism, or animism; groups divided according to country...every nation... Gypsies, just wanting to travel all the time.’⁷

At this point, it may well be asked, why haven’t these spirits reincarnated, especially since some of the Gnostics and New Agers, then as now, believed in the doctrine?

Such diversity only serves to emphasize the gulf between their teachings. As for Swedenborg, who seemed to possess extensive

knowledge of the spirit world from his considerable psychic abilities, denied reincarnation.⁸ Yet another component affecting the communication “hot-line” between earth and the spirit world is that

‘The belief-system of the medium and also that of the sitters in a psychic circle will affect both the message and the communicators, and tend to attract those of like mind from the other side.’⁹

This tendency among groups still attached to their earthly beliefs could help explain a serious problem I found with the reports of psychics a few years ago, which resulted in me stopping reading books regarding the afterlife altogether. I had noticed the many irreconcilable disagreements between reports of the afterlife and its conditions. I reasoned, therefore that, as these reports couldn’t possibly all be true, I therefore couldn’t trust any of them. However, the revelation that spirits are communicating from their own vantage points and belief systems would have gone some way to solving my dilemma. “As below, so above”, you might say. And there is another factor that may make some communications unreliable.

‘The Spirit Guides communicating with W. S. Moses... also speak of the tendency of immature spirits near the Earth-plane promoting superstitious ideas, of which reincarnation is a prime example.’¹⁰

Contradictory

New Age books and magazines can seem decidedly woolly and contradictory in their offerings on this subject of what happens to us after death. Here is an example from popular New Age author, Doreen Virtue. In an early chapter, we read,

‘In addition to angels, archangels and ascended masters, you have deceased loved ones with you to help... in a supportive way without interfering with your free will...they can work in conjunction with

God, the Holy Spirit, the ascended masters and the angels to help us fulfill Divine will (which is one with our Higher Self's intentions)...After all, they have all the time in the other-world now!'
11

Phew! What a multitude: deceased loved ones, angels, archangels, ascended masters, the Higher Self, the Holy Spirit and even God himself! Talk about *Avengers Assemble!* With all these powers watching our backs, it's truly remarkable how anyone ever has any calamities! But, at least that cute final pun seems to indicate that our loved ones are in the afterlife forever, right? Well, er, no. Fast-forward to the other end of the book and we read:

*'About half of the psychic blocks that I see in my audience stem from their past-life wounds ...It makes sense to go through a past-life regression to clear them.'*¹²

One might suspect that Ms Virtue includes PLR in her services also. But to continue, when our deceased loved ones are not watching over us, and, presumably, other living relatives, they are also reincarnating, while still enjoying 'all the time in the after-world?' Is this lady actually *thinking* about what she's writing? I'm not singling Virtue out here. Like I said, it's typical New Age material, which, in the context of whether we live forever in an afterlife or reincarnate, wants to both have its cake and eat it. Karma doesn't appear to figure in the equation, though. On the contrary, our Doreen writes

*'While suffering does foster spiritual growth, contentment creates even more...You don't need to suffer for the sake of growth! God certainly doesn't want you to endure pain, any more than you want your own children to.'*¹³

Now that *does* make sense! (I think).

True Spiritual Progress

The spirit of a Dr Peebles, as spoken through Mrs Anna Wickland, describes a progressive, rather than a cyclical advancement for the soul, whereby lessons are due to circumstance, rather than premeditation:

*'This little earth is only a grammar school. It is not a University, not even a High School; it is only the first lesson of life... In the spirit world you are free to travel everywhere; you do not need a physical body. Why go back into that prison again? Why should a child, ready to enter High School, go back to the Sixth, Seventh or Eighth grade?... You can learn in one day here what it takes ten or twelve years to learn on earth...All you learn in life is only like a day in spirit.'*¹⁴

However, this brief sojourn on planet Earth is nevertheless of major importance. For, the real lessons we undergo on this physical plane are our grounding for the next, immortal phase of our existence. As such, our stay here -this one and only time- is the true meaning of life.

NOTES

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11. Virtue, Doreen *How To Hear Your Angels*, pp 23-26. Hay House(2007)
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17. Unusual Cases Reinterpreted

Kumkum

We saw already that the idea of spirit obsession may account for the notion of “announcing dreams” as evidence previously interpreted as reincarnation. In one such case, Ian Stevenson told of Kumkum Verma, who had past-life memories of being a woman called Sundari. Unusually, for Stevenson’s Asian Indian cases, Sundari had been, like Jasbir Jat, of a lower caste than Kumkum. During her pregnancy, Kumkum’s mom had vivid dreams of a girl surrounded by snakes.¹ Stevenson interpreted this as an announcing dream, suggesting Kumkum’s lack of fear of snakes may have been prompted by Sundari’s keeping a cobra as a “guard dog” for her valuables! Importantly, however, Ian Wilson notes how Kumkum’s mom

‘Developed...cravings for milk, fruit and salted foods, all of which tastes were subsequently displayed by Kumkum, and had not been possessed by the dead Sundari.’²

Stevenson’s argument is thus flawed. For, while the dream explains the source of Kumkum’s mom’s knowledge of the snakes, it doesn’t explain why Kumkum should inherit *her mom’s* food cravings. If Kumkum was Sundari reborn, then her tastes should surely reflect Sundari’s. Indeed, Stevenson emphasizes this point elsewhere, in the case of a boy named Sujith’s past life memories of Sammy Fernando. Stevenson emphasized Sujith’s predilections for the hot foods, liquor and cigarettes favored by Sammy.³

I would attribute Kumkum’s memories to Sundari’s restless spirit, while ascribing her culinary tastes to her mom’s influence upon her developing fetus. We may, of course, cite also the birthmarks, xenoglossia, etc offered up as evidence of the past life spirit occupying the body of the new child. Here, Stan Gooch suggests an intriguing possibility, namely, support for

*'The old wives tale that the thoughts of the mother can affect the unborn child, and certainly that the fetus is aware and recording events. We know from their rapid eye movements that fetuses spend much of their time in the womb dreaming. Are some of the contents of the dreams supplied by the mother?'*⁴

Yet, this proposal is not enough in itself. For, while it would explain such thought transmission from mother to fetus in Kumkum's case, it cannot explain the girl's knowledge of the former life as Sundari. On the other hand, as we just saw, the reincarnation theory cannot explain how Kumkum possessed tastes for certain foods not possessed by Sundari. However spirit theory can explain the announcing dream, while it is perfectly feasible that Kum Kum's mother transferred her tastes in food to her daughter while Kum Kum was still in her womb, either psychically or by direct spiritual influence, or both (remember the *Blood Wedding* mother-child incident earlier(Chapter 3).

Amnesia

In one of Ian Stevenson's best-known cases, lecturer Uttara Huddar, who lived in Nagpur, India and spoke Marathi, Hindi and English, '*Started sharing her body with what could be called a discarnate woman*'⁵ as he put it. This 'discarnate woman' was named Sharada, and Uttara then began speaking an early 19th century version of Bengali that Sharada spoke. Like Q, cited above in Dwairy's study among the Druze (Chapter 8), Uttara was a mature 32 year old when her memories of Sharada began. Stevenson, on studying the genealogy, noted that Uttara had correctly identified five male members of Sharada's family, including her father and grandfather. However, as Uttara and Sharada alternated as personalities in Uttara's body -one being unaware of the other, in the manner of DID (MPD) sufferers- it may surprise many that Stevenson originally concluded

'The amnesia each personality appears to have had for events occurring to the other... suggests...possession... more than a case of... reincarnation... This implies that Sharada is a discarnate personality—that is, that she consists of surviving aspects of a real person who

*lived and died in the early years of the 19th century, and who, almost 150 years later, came to dominate and control Uttara's body.'*⁶

Continuity

However, Stevenson reviewed this position upon being informed that Uttara had a lifelong fear of snakes (Sharada had died of a snakebite while seven months pregnant), an attraction toward the Bengali language and people, and an innate knowledge of Bengali cuisine. He now favored the idea of reincarnation. Another factor that seems to have changed Stevenson's mind was that Sharada was '*Baffled by the many instruments invented after the Industrial Revolution.*'⁷ Stevenson reasoned that such lack of knowledge of changes since the death of their previous personality was a pointer to reincarnation rather than possession.

However, there is a problem with Stevenson's conclusion, and from his own research. A search through Stevenson's cases in his most popular works reveals that the period between death and reincarnation elsewhere is a maximum of around twenty years. So if Sharada died 150 years before Uttara's memories began, this would mean that she would have been capable of at least two incarnations before Uttara, assuming the hosts in each case lived till about 60, plus the period between incarnations. (This is, of course, based upon the reincarnation version of events, rather than spirit obsession/possession). And in each of these incarnations she must have become familiar with the advancing technology around her, even in rural India. And, indeed, such continuity is evident in Stevenson's own case of Shanti Dev, who pointed out just such changes that had occurred in her "past-life" village.⁸ (Shanti and her "former life", Lugdi Bal were both Hindu women, and therefore followed Stevenson's usual reincarnation schemata much more closely: Lugdi dying a mere thirteen months before Shanti was born). By reverting back to reincarnation theory, Stevenson has thus to explain where Sharada was for such a long "between life" period inconsistent with his own research. For, evidently, she was not incarnated and keeping up with inventions since her death.

Restless

This suggests there is another explanation for Sharada's lack of knowledge, and I suspect it may be to do with her religion. Sharada's name has an Islamic sound, and this, together with her speaking Bengali- the official language of Muslim Bangladesh today- suggests she may have been Muslim. Now, the great majority of Muslims do *not* believe in reincarnation (apart from the Druze, as we have seen). I would argue therefore that Sharada, though she clearly had not moved on to a higher plane of existence, was not seeking reincarnation either (she died prematurely of snake bite and her spirit may have been restless). Rather, I would suggest that, upon death, she eventually stumbled upon like souls of her own community as described by Andrew Jackson Davis in the last chapter. There, she may have discovered that

*'People in the heaven world are not in direct touch with...affairs on earth. They could not know [what] might be taking place in this world.'*⁹

Then, for whatever reason (maybe simple curiosity), she ventured close to the earth plane, eventually latching on to Uttara, even after a century and a half (as we have seen already with Alan Ross and the Scole spirits, this presents no problem).

'Possessing Influences...'

Uttara doesn't fit the usual spontaneous memory profile of the young child subject in cases ascribed to reincarnation, but in my opinion she does fit the criteria for *possession*, despite her more mature age. Similarly, if Uttara was indeed possessed by Sharada, the mature Uttara could likewise better resist any lasting takeover of her own body. Additionally, it may be asked why a person aged 32 would suddenly begin recalling a past life, so long after those memories are freshest? As to the fear of snakes, that's hardly remarkable in a country like India where cobras kill hundreds of people, mostly

children, every year. It may also be significant that Uttara's father was a Bengali enthusiast and this could well have attracted Sharada's spirit to her home, thus accounting for Uttara's fluency in an early 19th century form of the language. Ian Stevenson conceded that, ultimately, his own reincarnation cases may have been, instead,

*'Instances of similar 'possessing influences' in which the previous; personality just happened to die well before the birth of the present personality's body.'*¹⁰

Naturally, I would fully agree with this interpretation!

“Displacement” or Spirit Influence?

A strange case, featured in the *Occult Review* of January 1941, concerned a boy aged seven who died of a brain disorder. His father, who was said to be clairvoyant, stayed in touch with his son on the “astral”. The boy then announced that he was ‘coming home’. The boy's mom subsequently realized she was pregnant. The boy's contact then took the form of dreams, involving his dad and his aunt, who sensed the boy becoming younger. Finally, the boy's younger sister dreamed he was in a cot. When the new baby was born -a boy- he was very precocious, as if already familiar with his relatives and surroundings. James Webster asserts that, though this case seems to suggest strong evidence for reincarnation, it actually implies only

*'That particular individuals have been born again on earth, perhaps by displacing the soul destined for the new born baby in their eagerness to return to incarnation.'*¹¹

However, as this case is highly unusual, it follows therefore that only a very tiny amount of persons can be involved in such a scenario. However, as Webster then asks, if humanity in its entirety is not affected, surely the ‘law of Karma’ is seriously compromised?

I agree with Webster that this case challenges the whole doctrine of Karma, as there could scarcely be a stronger element of choice in this youngster's determination to resume his former life on earth. Also,

importantly, the boy in question seems to have continued his life as completely the same person he had been previously, rather than someone from another time/culture/gender/social class etc, as is common in most cases claimed to be of reincarnation.

Why A Soul Can't Incarnate More Than Once

However, if the above case is truly a case of “displacement”, then it is wholly in disagreement with the assertion contained in a spirit message to a Dr Samuels in 1955. This message describes an unassailable barrier to rebirth,-one which Australian author Geoff Cutler recalls, utterly demolished his belief in the doctrine of reincarnation. The message related how

*'A pristine original soul before incarnation does not have a spirit body...But when a soul incarnates, it gains....and never again loses, that spirit body...But a soul encased in a spirit body, cannot be born into an embryo because that embryo is within the spirit body of the mother and one spirit body cannot penetrate the other. It can only attach...The doctrine of reincarnation is, therefore... impossible...When a human being dies...his soul has already achieved ... the purpose of his creation, that is, individualization.'*¹²

If this notion is correct, it would quell the New Age idea that we are “old souls”, together with the question ‘if we accept the existence of spirits, what is to prevent such spirits living in successive bodies- isn't this a perfectly natural process?’ We have already seen the formidable barrier to living repeated lives, in the shape of the protective magnetic aura.(see Chapter 3) This barrier can certainly be breached, yet the indwelling spirit remains intact, even though eclipsed to a major or minor degree by obsession or full possession. Even if we do exist prior to this life somewhere in the great beyond, we would be equating a spiritual body to a physical body, which, in Dr Samuel's scenario, it can never be, as the human self is, ‘*Uniquely expressive.*’¹³ This, in turn, would mean that the above *Occult Review* case must be that of spirit attachment, rather than an actual re-

embodiment through “displacement”, because, to conclude Dr Samuels’ message,

‘Only a soul without a spirit body can enter a human body, and on the death of this body, the soul manifests its spirit body.’¹⁴

Are there any clues that this might indeed be the case, regarding the young boy ‘coming home?’ Cutler provides one strong indication that it might:

‘The older one is, the more likely that one’s astral body will decay rapidly after death and release one for the Spirit Spheres... But those that die young have a very strong astral body, and they will often spend considerable time in the astral planes...until they are able to cast off the astral body. The astral plane appears to give spirits who had very little earth time an opportunity to find their way spiritually.’¹⁵

So, in the case of the boy in the *Occult Review* above, we have several important factors, namely:

1. his ‘clairvoyant’ father staying in contact with him on the astral.
2. the boy’s announcing dream.
3. the mother’s subsequent pregnancy.
4. further dreams, in which his dad and his aunt sense him becoming younger.
5. the boy’s younger sister dreaming he was in a cot.
6. the new baby being another boy.
7. the new baby’s strange familiarity with relatives and surroundings.

Unusual

How might these factors be explained without refuting the idea of “one soul, only one body”? Before continuing, it is worth repeating that, even in the annals of reincarnation studies, these events are highly unusual. Also, no details are available regarding subsequent

events and how the boy developed. It would certainly be interesting to know whether the new child shed his former memories at a certain age, never to recapture them, as so frequently occurs. Nevertheless an alternative interpretation to Webster's theory of "displacement"- i.e. that of spirit obsession- is possible.

To begin with, the fact that the new baby was a boy is unremarkable when considering the chances are very slightly above 50/50. Next, we have the young age of the boy at death which, as we just saw, would strengthen his astral body and might well, in turn, reinforce his wish to remain with and influence his living family. Believers will interpret 'coming home' to mean reincarnation, though the boy need not have meant this at all. The father's clairvoyance is particularly relevant and would certainly prove highly conducive to the opening up of the psychic airwaves. Such communication would easily be converted into dreams. The father could have mentioned such a dream to the aunt who, in turn, transposed their content into visions of her nephew growing younger. Indeed, this could be the basis of many of the announcing dreams documented in past-life studies.

To continue, the younger sister's vision of her brother back in a cot presents no difficulty. We know she was younger than her brother -six years old or under- while being old enough to articulate her own dreams. She would therefore have to be aged about 4-6. Children at this age still live in *theta* mode between fantasy and reality, their psychic faculties being especially pronounced. The boy's mother, meanwhile, might well have been obsessing over the untimely death of her previous boy and his spirit, in turn, might have heard her thoughts and responded, especially upon "reading" that she was again pregnant (a documented feature of spirit communication is knowing of a pregnancy and even foretelling the sex of a child). Lastly, the precociousness of the new boy child can be easily accommodated by spirit attachment, with information conveyed telepathically from older to younger boy- the latter again in *theta* mode. As Madam Blavatsky is reported to have declared posthumously, through Anna Wickland.

*'Memories of "past lives" are caused by spirits that bring such thoughts and represent the lives they lived. A spirit impresses you with the experiences of its life and these are implanted in your mind as your own. You then think you remember your past.'*¹⁶

The Pollock Twins

As stated already, we have no further information regarding whether the dead boy's spirit detached itself at some later point. In any case, this strange tale has strong points of similarity to that of the Pollock twins. Their story, one of the best known in the history of past life research, is briefly as follows. One tragic morning in May, 1957, Florence and John Pollock's twin daughters, nine year old Jacqueline and Joanna, together with a school friend, were knocked down by a car and killed in Hexham, Northumberland, England. Eighteen months later, in October, 1958, Florence gave birth to another pair of twin girls, Jennifer and Gillian. Jennifer was born with a thin white line on her forehead which recalled a scar on her dead sister, Jacqueline's, forehead, due to a tricycle accident; Jennifer also had a birthmark on her hip in the exact same place as Jacqueline. But perhaps even more remarkable is what happened three years later...

The Pollocks moved from Hexham to Whitley Bay shortly after the birth of Jennifer and Gillian. Three years later, however, the family returned to Hexham for a day trip. There then began a whole series of uncanny incidents initiated by the new twin girls. Despite never before being in Hexham, they recognized the school and playground attended by Joanna and Jacqueline and also the house where the family used to live. Back in Whitley Bay, they were introduced to some toys of their sisters the Pollocks had kept. Both Jennifer and Gillian identified Joanna and Jacqueline's dolls by name. Then, in an incident involving a car coming toward them out of the blue, the girls screamed *'the car is coming at us!'* Even more bizarrely, Florence Pollock found Gillian cradling Jennifer's head one day and saying *'That's where the car hit you.'*¹⁷

Unsurprisingly, Ian Stevenson regarded this case as compelling evidence for reincarnation and, undoubtedly many people would be convinced. However, let us see how this case might be, instead, assessed in the light of spirit influence. It must be mentioned, firstly, that John Pollock was a devout believer in reincarnation, despite converting to Roman Catholicism in the 1940s (although, it also must be said, Florence vehemently opposed the doctrine). Nevertheless, such was John's obsession with reincarnation that, after Florence's death in 1979, he became a bookseller and his own study at home was filled with books on the subject, a factor which as Ian Wilson points out '*Seriously limits his reliability as an objective observer.*'¹⁸

And if Webster's "displacement" theory were true, then this case would constitute a double helping! However, I think we can safely dismiss such a scenario since the Pollock twins forgot their dead siblings at the young age of five, as we saw in Chapter 3, never to speak of them again. And from what we have learned so far, this suggests spirit attachment by Joanna and Jacqueline. We may therefore suggest another version of events other than reincarnation. In this revised scenario we might observe the following elements:

1. the violent and untimely deaths of Joanna and Jacqueline, which would both strengthen their astral bodies and possibly render them earthbound.
2. the almost obsessive belief in reincarnation by their father, willing his daughters to return to life.
3. the three year olds, Gillian and Jennifer, in *theta* mode, psychically tuning in to their dead sisters' impressions.
4. we have already seen (chapter 6) how birthmarks can be transmitted by a mother to her fetus.
5. the living twins almost as suddenly forgetting their dead siblings again.

All these elements are explicable within the concept of spirit influence. As for the "coincidence" of Florence Pollock giving birth to another set of twins, this is not as remarkable as the past-life believers might think, as twins tend to run in families. The issue of

the birthmarks would be especially relevant here, in what must have been Florence Pollock's heartbreaking, intense and repetitive rewinding in her mind of Joanna and Jacqueline, even down to Jacqueline's scars. Might we even speculate that Joanna and Jacqueline- who, aged nine, must have been aware of their father's preoccupation with rebirth- worked in spirit to help make his wish come "true", by influencing Gillian and Jennifer both psychically and physically? Or even, perhaps, that they had come to believe in reincarnation themselves and had been trying to reincarnate?

Fetal Attraction?

With these factors in mind, I offer a reinterpretation of a case cited as one of Dr Jim Tucker's most extraordinary. In this, Kendra Carter, aged four, developed a strong affection for her swimming instructor, a lady named Ginger. One day Kendra announced how she had been forcefully pulled out of Ginger's tummy by a 'bad man'. She had then been in 'a dark, cold place'. Kendra's mother subsequently discovered that Ginger had had a termination nine years previously. Dr Tucker then presents the "smoking gun": the fact of the abortion; the four-year-old too young to know what a termination was; the fact that the child's background was "conservative Christian" and therefore not grounded in reincarnation belief. Tucker concludes that this scenario can only add up to the little girl being a reincarnation of the aborted fetus.¹⁹

However, if we allow that that young children can be very psychic, and that spirits can obsess them, we may see a wholly different picture emerge. In this scenario, Kendra, described as 'lovingly attached' is thereby tuning in to Ginger's thoughts. Quite possibly Ginger is looking at the little girl and thinking out loud powerfully (even guiltily) on how her own aborted fetus might have turned out. Ginger then thinks of the termination process itself and Kendra picks up on that, expressing the event as a child would. Additionally, it is possible the little girl might have sensed her own mother's unspoken thoughts. Perhaps as a conservative Christian the mother secretly disapproved of termination, hence also the reference to the 'bad

man'- i.e. the abortion surgeon (otherwise, it's an oddly sanctimonious view from a small child). As for the point about such Christian conservatism and reincarnation being mutually exclusive, that may have been the case before New Age philosophy became part of the social scene, but not nowadays.

Yet the purely psychic explanation just covered leaves out one important factor: the 'cold, dark place' referred to which neither Kendra nor her mom, nor Ginger would be likely to know and think about. And it is here that I would favor the idea of a spirit-that of the fetus- communicating its experience to the little girl. Perhaps it had not moved on and had become attached to Kendra, intimating the anguish of being in its mother's womb before being expunged. In the psychic literature, there is sometimes a reference to such a dark, silent place as being a sort of twilight zone for souls that have not progressed. Reincarnationists will no doubt insist, 'no, no, the dark place bit settles it'. However they would then have to explain how come the fetus did not enter the between-life (LBL) state that features throughout the work of Michael Newton, and why the other inhabitants of the higher planes are seemingly incapable of intercepting an innocent little fetal being and caring for it. However, if it was trapped in Kendra's aura it might well have disappeared "offline". Indeed, Wickland refers to just such a case, regarding a female patient from whom

*'Another spirit was removed from her...this was a little girl who had been killed in the San Francisco earthquake, and who cried constantly, saying she was lost in the dark. It is needless to add that she was comforted and promptly cared for by spirit friends, who had been unable to reach her while she was enmeshed in the aura of a psychic sensitive.'*²⁰

Again, telepathy and spirit obsession offer a ready alternative to "past lives", providing a parallel in the above Wickland case which could not possibly be reincarnation. Kendra's precocious new demeanor, together with her first-person announcements are, we saw already, typical of spirit attachment in children. But I think the real clincher in this case is the very aspect that convinces Tucker of reincarnation.

For, what he sees as the problem is actually the explanation. Thus, we can just about entertain the idea of the ‘cold dark place’ being transmitted pictorially from a fetus to Kendra. But it is much harder to explain how a fetus, pre-language, and before any kind of moral development, can possibly communicate the concept of a ‘bad man’ abortionist. However, a spirit girl- now nine years old since Ginger’s termination- most probably could.

Pull

However, as we have seen in both the Pollocks and *The Occult Review* cases, sometimes other factors can decide how quickly a child’s spirit can access the higher worlds. In both these cases the children were older when they died. Both cases also involved a strong, spiritually inclined, father figure as well as a grieving mother, and these factors may have exerted a strong pull on the young spirits, backwards toward the earth plane.

Even if James Webster’s theory were true, i.e. that, in rare cases, a spirit can “displace” the spirit originally intended to occupy a body, that still would not represent reincarnation “by another name”. This is because, as we have just seen, the spirit that has vacated the body remains a sovereign being, complete with its own soul, personality and magnetic aura. Thus, there would still be two distinct persons involved, whereas reincarnation would require only one person inhabiting two consecutive bodies.

Limitless

At this point, it may be appropriate to address the question of what happens to children who die in the womb or early in childhood? Spirit communications provide plenty of evidence of spirit children who grow up just like children on earth do. Charles Tweedale mentions a spirit called Tabitha, who appeared to his family and servants in his own household at various times throughout their lives in the vicarage. Tabitha was first seen as a

pretty young child dancing and playing, then, eventually, Tweedale himself saw her apparition as a lovely full grown woman ²¹

More generally, there are cases where hypnotized subjects speak about a previous time in someone's womb without being brought to term. So are these people now being possessed by the spirit of a fetus that didn't make it? I would answer, why not? In fact, isn't that exactly what reincarnationists choose to believe? Surely, In their belief system, the spirit that "reincarnates" must itself be very small to enter a new born baby? (though we saw, in Chapter 3, that it is adult-sized spirits that get trapped). But in any case, how can memories of being a fetus possibly be verified? (in the pre-language state of a fetus, how could the mother be identified?) Confabulation can easily account for this, in the same way as people recall lives as animals and space people.

We saw how the human imagination is almost limitless, as has been proven in the case of False Memory Syndrome. In the hands of a hypnotist, "victims" truly believe and "re-live" their false experiences (see Chapter 15). Obviously, Jim Tucker believed that Kendra Carter was such a reborn fetus. However I would ascribe it partly to the little girl's natural psychic powers and partly to the fetal spirit, now eight years older, hovering near her mother. Moreover, modern science denies that the myelin sheathing of the brain of a fetus, or even an infant, is developed enough to carry any memories at all. ²²

Against this, it might be asked, aren't our brains are just sort of radios that allow the storage / retrieval of memories from our non-local consciousness? That's an interesting theory and would explain the difficulty in assigning memory to particular areas of the brain. However, in the case severe brain injury or disease, memories almost disintegrate, especially those formed before the onset. True, it could be argued that the "radio" is now broken and is now unable to pick up certain "broadcasts" (i.e. memories) But that analogy doesn't address why children, for the most part, forget

their past life memories by age eight or so: why is the “radio” suddenly switched off?

Having said that, however, it is perfectly possible for a fetal spirit to attach itself, or, indeed even an animal spirit (as we saw in Chapter 13, animals survive death, too). Rupert Sheldrake’s theory of “morphic dissonance ” seems respectable enough in this vein, and might yet explain why the two boys cited by Melvin Morse “tuned in” to the same past life. However, the destruction of memories by disease is damaging to the idea of past lives:

*‘Reincarnation...contradicts everything we know about human consciousness and the brain, especially about how **memory** works. Memories exist in neural connections in the brain. Brain traumas and diseases like **Alzheimer's** reveal that when these neural connections are destroyed, memories are destroyed. When the brain decays and dies memories will be destroyed. There is no logical reason for maintaining that there is a parallel entity (spirit or mind) that exists independently of the brain and which maintains memories that will be accessible to us only after we die or after this imagined parallel entity enters another body.’²³*

Obviously, such a wholly materialistic view will not accord with either the reincarnation believer or those like myself who hold to the idea of spirits.

NOTES

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18. Obsession v. Possession

Control

The possibility of the possession of Uttara Huddar at a later age, as we saw in the last chapter, has a well-known precedent in the 'Watska Wonder' case in 19th century USA. In this case, Laurancy Vennum was in her teens when she was possessed by the deceased Mary Roth. Thus, Laurancy literally woke one morning, her head full of complete knowledge of Mary's life. So thorough was the transformation that

*'She was adopted by the dead girls's parents. But lo! one day her normal self reappeared and retained control of its original earthly vehicle throughout the rest of her life.'*¹

In addition, it should be noted here that the two girls, Mary and Laurancy, had once been alive at the same time: Laurancy was 14 months old when Mary died.

Degrees

But, it may be objected, isn't the above example clearly documented as a case of possession which appears quite different to reincarnation ones? And aren't such cases very few because if all cases of reincarnation were possession, why wouldn't this be detected more often? Maybe occasionally there would be some kind of temporary identity confusion, but surely it's usually short lived and then either the possessing spirit has control or the original one does?

The answer is that possession or obsession are merely degrees of the same phenomenon with not the wide distinction that may be thought. It's to do with the amount of control over the victim. As an analogy, imagine you own your house. One day, someone turns up at your door claiming the house is *their* house. To make their

point, they begin stalking you over the rights to live there. That is obsession. However, you resist their attempts to get you out, but the stalker, being bigger and stronger than you, physically throws you out of your home and takes over, even changing the locks. That is possession. Repossession is eventually obtained and our squatter evicted, though in stubborn cases like the Wicklands', this might require more drastic measures. One website divides the phenomenon into:

1. **External** Possession- where a spirit can attach to your energy body- and
2. **Internal** Possession, where a spirit can step inside your body and compete with your soul, like in horror movies.² These differences appear to be the equivalent of: 1) obsession and 2) possession.

As to the reasons that spirits might possess mortals, ‘

*‘After someone dies, their spirit leaves their body and is supposed to cross over, but some spirits do not, usually because they have unfinished business or because they are afraid. Without their physical body ... these spirits then go in search of others’ energy This is usually the case with addicts or those who experienced sudden death or some type of trauma. They may try to ‘piggy-back’ off someone else and manipulate them to engage in certain behaviors that they enjoyed while alive’.*³

Distinct

Also, in the Watscka case, the age of the possessed must be considered. Lurancy Vennum was thirteen when the possession by Mary Rolf’s spirit began. Although not yet a mature adult, Lurancy nevertheless would have a much stronger sense of self than the young

children in cases cited as past lives, who can be as young as two or three. This meant that, after a few months, she was able to take back control of her body from Mary. Contrast this with Jack T (see Chapter 3), who was completely helpless to the obsession by Charle Herrman. The offending spirit in the case of a toddler needs much less force to cast its influence upon and occupy a young child. Moreover, in both the possession case and the obsession case an external spirit was identified and “evicted”.

This is crucial, as it illustrates that in both situations, two distinct spirits were competing for each child’s body: the resident spirit (Lurancy; Jack T) and the offending one (Mary; Charlie). This is the crux of the argument because in reincarnation teaching, there is only one spirit occupying multiple bodies sequentially (whatever sequence it is claimed to be through time and/or space). Lurancy’s background in rural 19th century America was not a reincarnation culture, so her case was understandably interpreted as possession. That this was the correct interpretation is proven by her full recovery, in the same way that Jack T’s obsession by Charlie Herrman was proven by *his* full recovery.

Delirium

But, the reincarnationist may object, doesn’t possession happen only in cases of physiological or neurological diseases? Surely, if such issues are present in children who have past life memories, then Stevenson and other child psychiatrists like Tucker would have noted any common pathology they found in such children? The answer is that, on the contrary, Lurancy Vennum ‘*Was a healthy child and had never been sick apart from measles*’⁴ Likewise, Jack T and the other child in Carl Wickland’s study were perfectly normal till Charlie Herrman and William Stanley began obsessing them, ultimately becoming so ‘disturbed’ that they had been given up as “incurable”. And in Jasbir Jat’s case, the boy had come close to death with

smallpox, indeed, being thought to have actually been dead. It is hard to imagine a child being more ‘physiologically diseased’! Also, in all three cases, the victims reverted back to their normal behavior after the offending spirits left. Ian Wilson writes that a child’s “past life”

‘May be accompanied by a trance or delirium...when the child may re-live, together with a marked change of voice, episodes meaningless or foreign to the observing parents.’⁵

Note the reference to a change of voice, which is present in possession cases. But though this is often accompanied by a noticeable change in demeanor also, there is not usually the dramatic change in facial features so characteristic of full possession. In fact, in obsessed children, generally, there is often considerable disturbance, as the James Leininger case highlighted (see Chapter 20). Wilson quotes Ian Stevenson’s own studies, in highlighting this delirious condition, in the case of Kumkum Verma, who experienced

‘States of near delirium so intense that her parents...positively discouraged...her... summoning up memories of her past life.’⁶

Similarly, Tyn Aung Myo had ‘*Deliria involving memories of a Second World War Japanese soldier.*’⁷

Susceptible

To repeat, young children have not yet formed a proper sense of self (significantly, it is when this happens that the memories actually begin to fade). It cannot help matters that a child, in such a situation, is told they were someone different in a past life, as happened to the Leininger boy (see Chapter 20). Also, children are very psychic and thus susceptible to channeling spirits (e g

invisible playmates). We saw also that young children can identify fully with the obsessing spirit in much the same way as in full possession cases, even suggesting there is only one personality present. That is, until the obsessing personality leaves the child naturally, as the child grows, or is forcibly ejected from the child's magnetic aura! (see Chapter 3).

And can we really believe that Laurancy Vennum would have been possessed so long by Mary Roth if she'd been born decades later and had access to the Wicklands' clinic? Yet even if we did not have the Wicklands' work and their removal of troublesome spirits, the past life theory still wouldn't hold, because there are the factors of violent death of the "past life" and the victim's forgetting around age eight. Make no mistake, Ian Stevenson and others would have attributed all these children as re-living past lives.

NOTES

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19. Spirit Theory Applied To Famous Cases

Shanti Dev

Other famous cases are prone to some confused narratives, as in the case of Shanti Dev, who was four years old when she “remembered” a past life as Lugdi Bal, who died shortly after childbirth. Shanti provided some impressive details, like remembering her “former” husband, Kedar Nath Chaubey’s, features, including his glasses and a wart on his cheek (recognizing him even though he pretended to be his brother), and their house in a faraway town, whose local Mathura dialect she could repeat. It was even claimed that she described the complicated surgery she had undergone in her former life as Lugdi. Not only that but, when queried about how Lugdi, a cripple, conceived, Shanti described the act of sexual intercourse! Kedar Nath also claimed she knew information regarding their former life together.

But on the other hand, Shanti could not remember her husband’s cousin’s name when he arrived to question her, and she was wrong about the location of their shop (which did not have a grocery store in front of it) and the house color.¹ Also, she could not remember when or how Lugdi died, or loaning money as Kedar Nath claimed she did. Significantly, also, Kedar Nath visited shops in front of Shanti’s house when she was small and even Ian Stevenson admitted she could have heard his story.²

We can see immediately, that two major factors apply to this case and a third cannot be dismissed. The first factor is the premature death of Lugdi Bal, which, as always, has the potential to render a spirit earthbound. Some of these spirits do not even realize they are dead. The second factor is that both Lugdi and Shanti were Hindu women living in India, where there would be a preponderance of lost souls seeking to reincarnate.

‘Because their cultures encourage a belief in reincarnation, low order, ignorant (earthbound) spirits from Hindu, Tlingit and Druze

*cultures are likely to believe that obsessing a child amounts to the same thing as reincarnation. Their main posthumous objective would be to live a new life in a new body. Because of their belief that they should reincarnate, they would assume that it was normal to try to enter the body of an infant or even a fetus.*³

This aspect, sadly, agrees with Carl Wickland's research. Additionally, there was possibly the reward of fame behind Kedar Nath's testimony that he was Shanti's past life husband, and he could have lied or just exaggerated. But, just to compound the situation, there may also be a political element to this story. For, while a scientist and skeptic, Dr Chand Nahatra, dismissed the case as 'unwarranted'⁴ Mahatma Gandhi organized a commission to investigate and concluded that the story was, indeed, one of reincarnation. However, not only were most of the commission- like Gandhi himself, devout Hindus- but the story took prominence against a backdrop of Hindu nationalist unrest and rioting, and there was the suspicion that confirmed "proof" of reincarnation would have served to appease the nationalists.

Omm Sety

This case, beginning over a century ago has, nevertheless, retained much of its mystique, undoubtedly due to its involving a British woman and an exotic "past life" location in ancient Egypt. In 1907, aged 3, Dorothy Eady fell down a flight of stairs. Initially pronounced dead by a doctor- who went to fetch a death certificate- she had made a miraculous recovery upon his return. This fateful episode would begin a life-long obsession with Egypt, beginning in 1908, when Dorothy visited the British museum with her parents. After this trip,

*'Dorothy would have recurring dreams of columned buildings surrounded by rich vegetation....When she stumbled upon the photo of the "Temple of Seti I at Abydos" she ran to her father and proclaimed "This is my home! This is where I used to live!"...Dorothy was dreaming of Ancient Egypt as it may have appeared thousands of years ago.'*⁵

Dreams

Eady then began to have dreams of a previous life as a priestess named Bentreshyt, in the temple of Isis at Abydos. There, as a child Dorothy's own age, Bentreshyt had been abandoned by her mother and taken into the temple as a sacred virgin. When Bentreshyt was in her teens, King Sety became smitten with her beauty, and they began a love affair. When, in breach of her vows, she became pregnant, she killed herself. When Dorothy herself was 16, at night King Sety would appear

*'As a normal man, and having intercourse with her. He talked much of state and cultural affairs, and on occasion took her to Amenti, the Egyptian afterworld, where she met Rameses II and other notables, and finally learned the reason for her double life: The gods of ancient Egypt were giving her and Sety a chance to expiate their ancient crime.'*⁶

(Kinky. This again confirms that there is sex available in the afterlife! What more do you want?!) Dorothy eventually emigrated to Egypt, never to return. She even married an Egyptian and bore him a son, Sety- in honor of her king and lover, while calling herself Omm Sety (i.e. mother of Sety). Eady now began to channel a spirit guide called Ho-ra, filling page after page with hieroglyphics. Remarkably, in 1956, she became the first female employee of the Department of Antiquities at Abydon. The department would be rewarded, for it was through her advice from her "memories" that Omm Sety would point out where to find the Temple Garden. After careful excavation, archaeologists found it. She also led them to a hidden tunnel on the north end of the Temple.

Freudian

Before evaluating Eady and her past life, a little healthy skepticism is in order. It was argued that Dorothy could have deduced the whereabouts of both temple garden and tunnel from the previous excavations, despite her denial. There is also a Freudian dimension to her story:

*'A fat, unattractive young woman...exploited by her father to do vaudeville acts in a motion picture house in Plymouth... Eady grew up in the era of...The Sheik (1921), in which a handsome, ruthless Arab rapt away a young Englishwoman... the time when H. Rider Haggard's works were still being issued... when Algernon Blackwood, Dion Fortune and lesser authors were writing of Egypt, romance, and reincarnation.'*⁷

So much for the rational. What of the paranormal element? There is actually much to interest us here also. First, the reader may by now have been alerted to certain parallels with the case of Jasbir Jat. i.e., the fact that both children were initially thought to be dead, and the subsequent, abrupt change in behavior. The difference here, though, is that there is no wriggle-room for reincarnationists to play the “walk-in” card, as instigated by a miracle. For, in Dorothy’s case, there was no holy man, only a humble British doctor, and he arrived *after* Dorothy had recovered anyway.

And there is another problem for the reincarnation theory. Eady was four years old in 1908 when first taken to the British museum, and, as such would have been able to identify herself using the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’ (an ability of most children by age 2-3). Why then did she not speak of this previous life before then? On the other hand, there is her first-person announcement, ‘*This is my home...where I used to live.*’ This factor recalls Jasbir Jat, Jack T and, as we shall see (Chapter 20), James Leininger.

Injured

But it is the blow to the head in this case- obviously serious enough to render the little girl unconscious (since she was pronounced dead), that provides an added dimension. In *Field Guide To The Spirit World ((2019))*, Dr Susan B Martinez reveals that many recorded cases of obsession, MPD (DID), and full possession, can be traced back to the victim’s receiving a blow on the head. Also, Eady was supposedly a reincarnation of Bentreshyt who committed suicide. Suicide, which may well have rendered her earthbound. Thus, a wandering spirit,

Bentreshyt may have been passing by when Dorothy hurt herself: as we saw in Alan Ross's memoirs, centuries of time and oceans of separation present no real problem to such spirits. In *News From The Next World (1940)* The Reverend Charles Tweedale relates how his family were visited by the spirits of Chopin, Stradivarius, Nelson and the Brontes, thus covering both considerable time and distance. Additionally, Bentreshyt may well have identified with Dorothy as she was the same age when she herself was abandoned to the temple in ancient Egypt. Lastly, reincarnation suffers another blow in the form of King Sety. Not only was he having dream sex with Dorothy, but he had been living in the Egyptian afterworld with Rameses II and other Egyptian gods, for four and a half millennia. Why had he not reincarnated? Perhaps because Amenti was permanent? (and very pleasant by the sound of it!)

Cameron McCauley:

The 2006 Scottish case of Cameron Macauley was investigated by Dr Jim B Tucker, and popularized in the UK TV documentary *The Boy Who Lived Before*. As a two year old growing up in Glasgow, Cameron began to have memories of a "previous" life on the Outer Hebridean island of Barra, some 200 miles away. Cameron described a white, single storey white house on the island with three bathrooms. He had three brothers and three sisters who slept in different bedrooms and a black and white dog. Cameron said that his past life father, Shaun (or Sean) Robertson had been hit by a dark colored car and killed. A curious feature was that Cameron remembered planes landing on the beach.

Aged five, Cameron was taken to Barra- a trip which proved to be successful in some ways. Although at first no trace of his previous family was found, it transpired that a Robertson family from the mainland vacationed in Barra's more remote north. This family fitted the profile and their holiday home was, indeed, a single storey white house with three bathrooms. Astonishingly, planes were seen touching down on the beach nearby: Barra being the only place in Scotland

where a beach doubled as an airstrip! A Robertson family member, Gillian, also confirmed the existence of the black and white dog in a photograph. The photo also contained a dark looking car.

Imaginative

Significantly, despite these “hits”, ‘*Nothing could be found of the man Cameron recalled as his father on the island.*’⁸ Pointing to a neighboring house, Cameron said he knew the occupant, yet couldn’t name them. Upon being told that Cameron’s “past life” father’s name, Shaun (or Sean) means “old” in Gaelic, Jim Tucker attempted to explain the missing father by suggesting that Shaun might have been just a nickname {however the name is simply Irish for “John”}.

But in any case, Gillian Robertson had already denied this possibility by saying she ‘*Knew of no man in the family who had been hit by a car and no child who had died young.*’¹⁰ To deal with this double blow of both a missing father and, indeed, a missing “former life” child, Tucker suggested that Cameron might have mixed up *two* previous lives! As Beyerstein observed, reincarnationists are nothing if not imaginative. And impressive as many of Cameron’s memories proved to be, these are nevertheless serious omissions.

Tantalizing

This, then, is a tantalizing case. Some of the recollections are indeed impressive. Yet two of the central “past life” characters are missing, which makes the reincarnation theory difficult to reconcile. Yet, if we apply the spirit theory, we have to ask, *whose* spirit was obsessing Cameron? The Robertsons were from the mainland, so no actual sea crossing to Glasgow was involved. It may be relevant, too, that Cameron reported his previous self falling out of bed and going through a hole (the “dark place” of Kendra Carter or the “tunnel” of NDEs?).

This might tie in with Cameron’s “previous life” supposedly being a young boy of six. Such a spirit might have still remained earthbound

or on the astral, as he died young (see Chapter 17) and, still within the *theta* brain state, may have more easily confused some of his own life narrative. This would contrast with the memories of Om Sety's much older "former life" Bentreshyte which were lucid enough for her to find the Temple Garden.

Advert

Skeptics might note, too, that Cameron's case was offered in response to an advert seeking British reincarnation cases, though I am certainly not implying any fraudulence by his family. However, it could conceivably be cryptomnesia: perhaps the child's family watched a documentary about Barra, featuring the Robertson family. However, Cameron was one of twins and the other child seems to have been unaffected. Some of the points are easily addressed. For example, for girls and boys to occupy different bedrooms is a very common arrangement in families. The other alternative is in Sheldrake's "morphic fields", which, as we'll see later, in Chapter 26, can never be completely ruled out.

Barbro Karlen

Swedish girl, Barbro Karlen (1954-2022) caused a sensation by claiming to be Ann Frank reincarnated. However, Frank was channeled by psychic, Elisa Medhus, in (2014) ¹¹ eight years before Karlen died- another overlap in lives thus strongly suggesting spirit obsession and not reincarnation. Interestingly, Frank and Karlen were both Geminis, which might explain their early writing skills (via ruling planet, Mercury). One reincarnation website relates how Barbro was confronted by a police officer, whereupon *'Barbro realized that this police officer was a reincarnated Nazi guard from Belsen'*¹²

This seriously compromises the theory of Karma, for, we must ask, what bad Karma could Ann Frank have accrued in some former existence to die in Belsen in the first place? Such extermination

camps were unprecedented in history, previously, so she is most unlikely to have policed one in a former life. Also, what Karma had Frank accrued in her own brief, sad, lifetime in the Netherlands to be confronted in her “next” life, as Barbro, by one of her executioners? Lastly, why was this Nazi guard himself reincarnated as an ordinary policeman, leading an average life, in civilized Sweden, with such a past life record?

Majid

A case in Marwan Dwairy’s study of the Druze likewise illustrates this mix of childrens’ accurate and muddled memories. Majid was five when, after he had, typically, *‘Manifested various emotional difficulties.’*¹³ He “recalled” a past life in which a man called Sa’ab had taken his money and bought a car with it. Majid remembered a family in which he had three or four children and that he had died, significantly, in a car crash. Eventually he met up with his past life family in a nearby village.

Some of the information Majid provided is impressive. Thus, when asked by his past-life brother to prove who he was, Majid says he showed him where he had died in the car accident {the car was even still there!} Majid told a friend details of the last meal they had, together with some wine. Majid then entered his past-life house and asked his past-life wife why she had re-arranged the sofas and convinced her of his past-life identity by finding the key of a cupboard hidden under a jar! Some of the narrative, however, is less impressive. Majid was able to locate his former residence only on the third pass, and seems to have recalled his former name only after an elderly man prompted him, *‘Maybe you are Salman?’* Dwairy recounts that

‘Information... was mainly about his tragic death and...his past-life family. Some... was unreasonable. For instance... for the car, he claimed he paid a million shekel (about \$250,000)... He could not describe his childhood in the family or at school...or recall any

teacher's name, schoolmate, or special experience... Some fragmented information about his past life occupation and marriage was given, but much... was missing.'¹⁴

These gaps are, again, typical. Salman's untimely, violent death is an important factor. This death, incidentally, was well known among the Druze community and Majid's father well recalled it. This too might be significant. That said, Majid, at age five, was in the psychic zone, when some children seem to be able to read people's thoughts directly, without even bringing spirits into it. We saw this with the little girl playing at doll weddings and with pets mysteriously tracking a distant owner.

Many parents are familiar with children's "imaginary playmates" and it is worth asking if some of these playmates are spirit children or even adults being channeled. These spirits appear much friendlier and may be supplying the living child with information about themselves and their own lives while on earth. However, if the communication has not been framed within a reincarnation narrative, the information will simply be taken at face value, without need of a "past life" interpretation.

Jenny Cockell

Doting

Many cases claimed to be of reincarnation involve grandparents reincarnating as their kids' kids. The case of Jenny Cockell who was "reincarnated" as one of her own grandchildren, is a well known example. The believer may ask why on earth these spirits would want to possess their grandchildren and confuse and potentially harm them? Surely It makes no sense? But no-one is saying that a grandparent is *willfully* harming their grandchild. In any case, they would likely be *obsessing*, not *possessing* them. Rather, like in-tribe reincarnation, the spirits in such situations might seek to remain close to their kin, illustrating that in-family ties can be just as strong as tribal ones (a tribe is really only an

extended family, after all). Their influence may, thus, be like the classic “doting parent” (or grandparent) Sadly, however, the grandchild concerned may have been obsessed by a grandparent trying to draw close to them but, instead, getting trapped in the grandchild’s protective aura.

Mayhem

Besides, the reincarnation viewpoint in this case makes even less sense. According to the book *Yesterday’s Children*, Jenny Cockell, born in 1953, claimed to be the reincarnation of Mary Sutton, who died in 1932. Cockell claimed that, at the age of 39, she began to contact those of Mary’s eight children (the youngest being born in 1932) who were still alive. But James Webster asks, reasonably enough, why Sutton would bother reincarnating just over twenty years after her death, then wait nearly forty years before making contact with her children, who had either died anyway, or else were now in their eighties? It surely would have been more logical to have remained in the afterworld to reunite with them! Webster brilliantly sums up the potential chaos:

‘When Jenny passes over this time... will she await to welcome her own children from this life as their mother?...what of Mary and her children reuniting from the previous life? Which mother are the Sutton offspring looking for? Is she expected to be Mary the mother of one generation and also Jenny the mother of the latest generation? ...the mind boggles thinking of how many other personalities she is, and... what a mayhem...reincarnation actually presents.’¹⁵

Arthur Guirdham and the Cathars

Garbled

This case, originating in the 1960s, was investigated by Ian Wilson, so I will only briefly touch upon it. However, it reveals the garbled nature of the evidence, together with the inexplicable behavior of

another psychiatrist, Arthur Guirdham. Guirdham wrote of attending a patient who he called Mrs Smith, in Bath, England in 1962. Mrs Smith was suffering from nightmares of being tortured and burnt at the stake as a Cathar heretic by the Catholic church in 13th century France. Her lover, Roger, who Guirdham believed to be himself (more Freudian input ?), also died.

Then, in 1968, another woman, a casual acquaintance who he called Clare Mills, claimed also to have memories of being a Cathar. Moreover, this lady had a scar on her thigh she claimed was made by a branding iron in that former life, even letting Guirdham examine it. Later still, in 1971, yet another woman, named as Betty Butler by Guirdham, came on the scene claiming similar memories. At face value, Guirdham cites some impressive knowledge on the part of his secret clients. For instance, a historian confirmed that the Cathars wore blue robes, which was not well-known. Similarly, the use of loaf sugar for chest ailments. Guirdham also reproduced some doodles purported to have been drawn by Betty as a child, with names of prominent Cathars in broken French.

Ignored

Less impressive, however, is that Guirdham never disclosed the real identities of his “Cathar” clients, even after Wilson, the respected author of *The Turin Shroud (1978)*, requested an interview with Guirdham’s clients, promising complete anonymity. Guirdham refused outright, insisting on doctor/patient confidentiality, even when Wilson pointed out that Miss Mills was not even a patient of Guirdham’s! Wilson then requested a photo of Miss Mills’ branding birthmark, or even a formal letter from her doctor attesting to the scar, but both requests were ignored by Guirdham ¹⁷ (we saw in Chapter 6 how Ian Stevenson refused to provide Wilson with photographic evidence of any of his clients’ birthmarks purported to correspond with the manner of death of the past life).

It is tempting to treat such evasive behavior as highly suspicious, especially in the absence of any verifiable evidence for Guirdham’s

claims. And they might well constitute pure fantasy and the exploitation of a popular subject for profit, even extending to three best-selling books (more on this in Chapter 28). However, there is one intriguing aspect to this case that might lend it at least some plausibility. This is the claim that, in the case of all three female clients, there was a trauma suffered at a young age which led to their subsequent nightmares. Thus in Mrs Smith's case, she almost died of peritonitis at age eleven (though, elsewhere, Guirdham says it was age thirteen or fourteen). Clare Mills, likewise, contracted near-fatal diphtheria at age five. As for Betty Butler, she had a severe attack of scarlet fever at age seven -around about the time her Cathar scribbles were made.¹⁸

Anguish

So, if these last occurrences were indeed true, we have several elements of interest. First, as we have seen, traumatic experiences can open up the psyche to spirit influence. It is therefore significant that the past life memories came after these episodes. Second, the Cathars believed in reincarnation, which made them heretics. If certain of these people's spirits had made their way to southern England (no great distance over seven centuries from southern France) they might well have become attached to the auras of these young girls, perhaps even believing themselves to be reincarnated.

Third, there is the pain and anguish suffered by these Cathars' own deaths: such trauma, coupled with belief in rebirth, is a powerful recipe for remaining earthbound. Lastly, the fact that, prior to the dangerous illnesses of the 20th century English ladies, there was no mention of their former lives. This was also the case with Guirdham himself. We might thus ask why, if someone is reincarnated following an horrific death in a past life, such memories do not manifest almost immediately after the reborn child is able to speak articulately. To me, this only lends support to the spirit theory, or maybe cryptomnesia, with a possible sexual element between Guirdham and his female clients.

Holes In One Of Stevenson's 'Strongest' Cases

Despite being so highly regarded in reincarnation circles, both as a pioneer and as a researcher, Ian Stevenson has nevertheless had his share of critics. As an example, in one of Stevenson's supposedly exceptional cases, Imad Elewar, a Druze boy, claimed to be Mahmoud Bouhamzy. Stevenson claimed 57 factual "hits". However, Leonard Angel found otherwise. First, no Mahmoud Bouhamzy was found, only an uncle, Ibrahim Bouhamzy, but he did not match up either: he did not have a wife named Jamilah, a daughter named Mehibeh, sons named Adil, Talal, Salim and Kemal, nor a brother who was a judge in Tripoli. Ibrahim died aged 25 of tuberculosis, not in an accident with a truck as claimed, nor could he speak English. Angel summarizes

*'If a case regarded by Stevenson to be among the strongest -its purported verifications conducted by Stevenson himself- falls apart under scrutiny as badly... it is reasonable to conclude that the other cases, in which data were first gathered by untrained observers, are even less reliable.'*¹⁹

Ransom v. Stevenson

As long ago as the 1970s, Stevenson's former assistant, Champe Ransom, wrote a report criticizing Stevenson's working methods. He alleged how Stevenson filled in gaps in the narrative and used leading questions. According to Ransom, Stevenson also allowed too long a period-often years- between the claimed past life memory and Stevenson's interview. This increased the chances of possible communication between the families of the deceased and the families of the child subject. Indeed, this fear seems to have been well-founded:

'In 90% of the cases surveyed, the children's families who remembered the reincarnations had already met the families of the deceased before the start of Stevenson's research, which raises the

*suspicion that the reports were previously combined and refined among the families, hence the reason for the matching responses.*²⁰

Ransom also took exception to Stevenson's practice of glossing over weaknesses in the cases by mentioning them elsewhere in his literature, rather than during the discussion of the case itself. Yet this prior contact between families may suggest an intriguing possibility regarding mother and fetus communication. Building upon Carl Sagan's observations that much of a fetus's time in utero is spent dreaming, Wilson speculates the possibility that

*'During pregnancy, a mother's mental traumas...may be unconsciously transmitted to the unborn child, so that the child subsequently takes on what is merely the illusion of past life memories by identifying itself with the victim of the traumas. Such a view is well supported by the in-family nature of the past life memories... and by the disproportionately high number of child cases who identify themselves with a victim of a... sudden, violent death.'*²¹

This view could also help explain the case of the Pollock Twins, whose mother had experienced such a devastating trauma with her previous set of twins. And we saw, in Chapter 6, the ability of a mother to transfer the memories of extreme violence to her fetus in the form of birthmarks. Additionally there is the phenomenon whereby spirits can inflict visible marks and injuries on mortals- as cited by Holly Joy (Chapter 6)- and the self-creation of stigmata and the likewise self-inflicted wounds and marks on the flesh of hypnotized victims of past violence in their present lives.

In summary, these well-known past life cases are combination of "hits" and "misses". Frustratingly, they remain nevertheless too detailed to dismiss as cryptomnesia--especially as children would not normally have access to such oblique information- yet too faulty to demonstrate past lives. However, there is no reason why a combination of different elements might not be present in these cases,

or, indeed, many other reincarnation claims. However, if a child is channeling information from spirits, some of that information may well be distorted, like a badly tuned radio.

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20. Soul Survivor?

The case of James Leininger was the subject of the best-selling book, *Soul Survivor*. However, Michael Sudduth critiques this case in his article, *The James Leininger Case Re-examined*. The official story is as follows. When James was aged two he began to have vivid, recurring nightmares of being a pilot whose warplane got shot down in flames and crashed into the sea. The pilot, unable to free himself from the plane, subsequently drowned. Upon investigation, a pilot fitting the description, James Huston, was found. Huston also had a colleague, Jack Larsen, who likewise died. Gradually, little James provided more information, including the name “*Natoma*” which turned out to be *Natoma Bay*, a World War 2 aircraft carrier Huston had launched from. James was also able to name the airplane Huston was shot down in, a Corsair.

When his dad, Bruce, brought home a picture book on World War 2 aircraft, James named all the planes correctly, even though he had apparently never seen such books. He even stated that Corsairs got flat tires when landing on aircraft carriers. James drew pictures of aircraft dog fights and signed his name “James 3”. James even had three GI Joe toys who he named Billy, Walter and Leon. Huston had three squadron chums named Leon Conner, Walter Devlin and Billie Peeler” who also died in battle! Aged four, James said he wanted to fly an F-18 Hornet as a “slot pilot” and could identify the tailhook as being exclusive to naval planes. Taken to a reunion of Natoma Bay pilots, James recognized, and called by name, one of those present, Bob Greenwalt!

During toy airplane battles, James called American planes “Wildcats and Corsairs” and the Japanese planes, correctly, “Zekes” or “Betties”, which had a “big red sun” on the fuselage. James shocked his mom, Andrea, by referring to what she thought was a bomb under the plane wing as a ‘dwop (drop) tank’. Then, at age five, James startled Bruce by saying, *‘Every day is like a carrier landing. If you walk away, you’re okay.’* - this statement being a verbatim utterance

from a pilot of Huston's acquaintance! James could also salute and even imitate the gestures of a pilot inside the cockpit. James eventually met Huston's sister, Anne Huston Barron. After verifying shared childhood memories and details James made about her family, including the problems caused by his father's alcoholism and the existence of a painting by their mom of Anne as a child, Anne '*Became convinced that he was indeed her brother reborn.*'¹

Problems

So far, so inexplicable. However, there are problems. First,

*'The USS Natoma Bay apparently never had Corsair planes on board, Huston had not been flying one when he went down. Larsen had not been shot down and was indeed still alive and well.'*²

Additionally, James Huston was *not* shot down over Iwo Jima but over Chichi Jima-150 miles further north, in a *Wildcat* airplane. An ABC documentary on the case claimed that James watched only kids' shows and there was no exposure to war history. However, it was later revealed that Bruce took two-year-old James to the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Dallas to see World War 2 aircraft, and it was only after this visit that the nightmares began. There are also problems with James's version of Huston's death. Bruce got his information regarding Huston's death from four veterans from a different ship- *Sargent Bay*- and a different squadron, a full sixty years after World War 2 ended.

However, as Sudduth reveals, the Natoma Bay's own Aircraft Action Report (AAR), compiled shortly after the battle, disagrees. The report showed that Huston's FM-2 *Wildcat* was *not* on fire just before crashing into the harbor and, in fact, no damage to the plane was observed. Rather, it was thought to

have been impossible for Huston to survive such an impact and explosion, and that anti-aircraft fire most likely killed him, not the crash. As Sudduth points out,

*'None of this supports the narrative of Huston being trapped in a burning plane...much less surviving the impact and dying from drowning after a failed attempt to extricate himself from the sinking plane. Quite the contrary; the report refutes this narrative.'*³

Alternatives

Before speculating further, let us examine alternative, less paranormal sources for much of James's knowledge and the content of his nightmares. Far from not being exposed to images of WW2 warfare, he is known to have watched a video called *The Blue Angels* repeatedly, as well as a TV documentary called *Battle Stations: Corsair Pacific Warrior* in 2002. These show take off and landing by WW2 planes on aircraft carriers, bombing of targets and graphic depictions of them exploding on fire while in the air. James's reference to Corsairs getting flat tires is also cited on the documentary, but as a common problem with all carrier-launched warplanes. *Battle Stations*, moreover, contains the statement from Colonel Archie Donahue. *'Each day in life is like a carrier landing. If you can walk away from it you're in good shape!'*⁴

Meanwhile, the Cavanaugh Air Museum James visited in February and May 2002 during two long visits featured a big Japanese naval "red sun" flag, paintings which included a Corsair fighting over Pacific Islands, B25s, Spitfires and Wildcats, complete with drop tanks -which might account for the fighters that James identified in the airplane book. In October, 2001, James also attended the Sertoma Cajun Air Festival at Lafayette airport in his home town. Here he met with some Blue Angel pilots who might well have contributed to his knowledge of WW2 fighters.

The show also featured a flight simulator. Moreover, a Corsair was located in Lafayette until July 2000, prior to arriving at Cavanaugh in

2002, as documented at the Warbird Registry, (2019). Sudduth points out how all the behaviors touted as remarkable and paranormal are either depicted or mentioned repeatedly in the *Blue Angels* video: saluting, carrier landings, fighter planes with tail hooks, and terminology such as “slot pilot.” This video, combined with James’s visit to the Cavanaugh Flight Museum were

‘More than sufficient to supply him with the idea of being a pilot... of flying a Corsair fighter plane off a boat, being shot in combat with the Japanese, his plane catching fire, and... crashing in the water...Even the timing of the origin of the nightmares is what we would expect given... developmental psychology.’⁵

But what of James greeting Bob Greenwalt by name? Or the names of the GI Joe dolls matching the Natoma Bay pilots? Or signing his name James 3? Or the shared memories with Anne Huston? Firstly, Bob Greenwalt is known to have phoned the Leiningers, and James could’ve heard his voice and name then (we have seen the remarkable ability of the human brain to store details). Perhaps he called more than once. As for the G.I. Joes, these were named by James over a twenty month period, being birthday and Christmas presents.

While researching James’s claims, Bruce acquired, over this period, the names of eighteen men from Natoma Bay killed in action, and three first names corresponding to those of the GI Joes were among those names. Again, Bruce could’ve mentioned these names out loud at any time over that period. As to referring to himself as “James 3”, this could mean the little boy’s own age at the time. But in any case, wouldn’t James have signed himself “James 2” if he was indeed Huston reborn?

And it seems remarkable how James Leininger can remember Huston’s childhood memories, yet cannot recall the much more harrowing and recent events surrounding Huston’s death, including what plane he flew and even believing Jack Larsen to be dead (especially as Huston was a mature adult). Regarding Anne, she was 85 when she met James and may not have had the best memory of

what transpired. Plus, she could have been asking him leading questions, such as ‘do you recall so and so’?, or ‘do you remember when...?’

Tell-Tale

I believe the above objections rule out reincarnation. However, we still have in this case, several of the tell-tale signs of spirit obsession. Thus, we have the violent death of the past-life subject, James Huston and the typical fading of memories around the age when the child’s psychic powers wane, and any spirit influence weakens as the individual asserts itself:

‘James himself would have dreams and nightmares and these memories intruding into his thoughts until he was 8 years old, after which they would subside and leave him in some peace.’⁶

It may be significant, also, that James Leininger was actually born in San Mateo, CA, and that Anne, while originally from Pennsylvania, lived in Los Gatos, CA⁷, which are in adjoining counties: Huston’s spirit would thus not have had far to wander from his sister’s home. Also, we have seen how young children can be very psychic, and James may have tuned in to some of Anna’s own thoughts regarding her brother. We saw, too, how a young child, lacking a developed identity, frequently speaks in the first person and James is reported to have said, of Huston’s fatal plane crash, *‘That’s how I died!’⁷*

Alternately, I might still opt for cryptomnesia rather than spirit obsession. There are just too many discrepancies, together with a host of everyday explanations for James’s experience. But, ultimately, it is the technical difficulties that challenge the idea of James Leininger expressing James Huston’s assured knowledge and experience. For instance, In spite of the *Blue Angels* videos mentioning how the Corsair was re-designed during World War 2,

*'James gives no indication of being aware of... the specific model of Corsair he would have test flown had he been Huston ...His claims... are what we'd expect from a toddler who had viewed videos or heard conversations about carrier landings, but who lacked... a more conceptually developed understanding of WW2 warbirds.'*⁸

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21. Bridey Revisited

Probably the most famous of all past life memory cases- that of Bridey Murphy- was once ascribed wholly to cryptoamnesia. However the case has since undergone an un-debunking ¹so it is only fair to have another look at it. The story is set in suburban America in the 1950s, when Virginia Tighe, placed under hypnosis by businessman Morey Bernstein, became Bridey (Bridget), a 19th century Irish woman, complete with authentic brogue. Bridey's story, briefly, was that she was born in Cork, in 1798. Though a protestant, she married catholic barrister Brian McCarthy, first in a protestant ceremony in Cork when she was twenty, and then in a catholic ceremony in Belfast, where the couple subsequently lived. She died in 1864. Here are the main highlights. First, the "hits." Bridey identified obscure geographical details, and personages such as

*'Baylings Crossing ... a crossing point which would not appear on a map.... on an 1801 map of Cork was an area just outside the city called Mardike Meadows, which corresponded very well with Bridey's description of living with her parents at "the meadows"....Two of the Belfast merchants Bridey named, a Mr. Carrington and a Mr. Farr, were found listed on a registrar of Belfast merchants from that era.'*²

Bridey also used some period terms. For example, upon sneezing, she requested a "linen," (handkerchief), said that her mom had made "slips," (pinafores) and mentioned a tuppence—a coin that later fell out of common use, but was used in the time that Bridey lived. She also correctly named a Belfast newspaper of that time, the *News-Letter*. On coming out of a trance, Bridey launched into a realistic looking Irish jig at Bernstein's request.

Omissions

So far, so impressive. It should be mentioned also that Virginia Tighe appeared not to have been motivated by money or fame, adopting a pseudonym in Bernstein's book, and after being "outed," refused public appearances and TV shows. Also, according to Bernstein, Virginia was not interested in books. However, Bernstein-already a successful businessman -may have had a financial interest in the case. Also, it should be noted, he was a believer in reincarnation. Bernstein's publisher, Doubleday, engaged lawyers in Ireland to investigate the case but they came up with nothing substantial. But, worse, are the many problems with the narrative itself. Here, are the main "misses", as compiled by Paul Edwards:

*'Irish records of births and deaths...cover 1864.... none list Bridey's death. Cork city directories... from 1820...do not mention her family...Belfast newspapers carry no obituary for a Mrs Bridget McCarthy at any time in 1864...Bridey recalled that...she and Brian resided at Dooley Rd, Belfast but no such road has ever existed in Belfast...While living in Cork, Bridey attended Mrs Strayne's day school.... but no school bearing this name or similar has been found. Bridey asserted she bought a camisole at a ladies' store called Caddens House...but there is no trace of a Caddens House... Bridey said she read a book entitled 'The Green Bay' but no such title has ever been found in Ireland.'*³

These are major omissions. There were other, less serious, errors. Bridey's local priest, Father John Joseph Gorman, didn't show up in the church records (There was a Father William Gorman but he was in County Meath, not Belfast). Bridey said that Brian taught law at Queens University and mentioned other teachers as McGlone, Fitzhugh and Fitzmaurice. but neither her husband's name nor these others appear on the faculty records. However, 1859 records showed a Fitzmaurice and a McCloin as faculty members, but not teachers. Another issue is that, despite being a lawyer's wife, no will has been found.

We can possibly overlook the confusion over the names McClone (McGlone) and Fitzmaurice- even though first names differed and

their positions at university are wrong. Likewise, the priests named Gorman: churches sometimes had short lives in the early 19th century, so we will gloss over their not being successfully located.

Significantly perhaps, there was a department store named Caddens in Virginia Tighe's neighborhood in Chicago, where she spent her childhood and adolescence. However, the big events in Bridey's life which should have been relatively easy to verify, just have not been.

Possibilities

What are we to make of all this? Staunch reincarnationists and cynics alike will find content to suit them but, tantalizingly, there is not enough to make a case for any one position. It seems to me there are three possibilities:

- a) Virginia Tighe was a reincarnation of Bridey Murphy.
- b) Virginia was confabulating- albeit innocently- Bridey's story, drawing upon cryptomnesia to fill the details.
- c) Virginia "channeled" the spirit of Bridey Murphy.

I think {a} can be fairly safely ruled out. There are just too many "misses" to support a case for reincarnation. I would not rule out (c) altogether because, deep hypnotic trances can render the subject prone to attachment by restless spirits. Thus, it is feasible that Bridey's spirit, earthbound, her memories somewhat confused, made its way across the "pond" from Ireland to the USA between the mid-1860s to the mid-1950s when Tighe's "memories" were first obtained. However, the most likely scenario is that of cryptomnesia. This would account for the hazy part-memories and the conflation of facts, for example, Caddens House being a real place, but in Chicago (Virginia's home town), as opposed to Cork (Bridey's home town).

'Inventiveness'

Investigator Eric Dingwall cites that hypnotized subjects know many things they don't know in their conscious state ⁴ and Professors Jerome M. Schneck and Lewis R. Wolberg report the deep trance

subject's 'uncanny inventiveness.'⁵ They also revealed that both Virginia's parents for the first three and a half years of her life were part Irish⁶ and further discovered that Virginia attended drama classes in High School and was able to reproduce an Irish brogue.⁷ Something like a place or person's name or an expression may have been mentioned in passing by a parent or Irish relative and impressed itself on Virginia's young mind. In this regard, recall that Cynthia had read a whole book containing details about Blanche Poyning when she was twelve, yet had still forgotten about it (Chapter 1). Unlike the SPR investigator in Cynthia's case, Morey Bernstein did not ask Virginia what the source of her knowledge was.

And while Tighe may not have been interested in books, movies were a well-developed industry as a possible source of knowledge spanning roughly thirty years of Virginia's lifetime since her birth in 1923. Also, in the days before TV took hold, cinemas were much more frequently attended. There were also radio programs she could have listened to and forgotten. There was a world's fair in Chicago 1893 which featured a full Irish village with 15 cottages and girls spinning and singing and dancing jigs. While this was, of course, well before Tighe's birth, she could perhaps have seen someone who had attended re-enacting the jig. There is also the question of certain anachronistic terms Bridey used. Although this impressed some,

*'Mixed with... convincing "Irishisms" were many modern American words and expressions such as "candy" and "downtown." This isn't surprising as it's not unusual for hypnotized subjects to use some of their own current idiomatic language. One would expect a mixture rather than consistent use of one or the other language.'*⁸

However, such a position is suspect. For, while

*'It may be appropriate in the case of "spontaneous" memories of past lives, when an individual in his present conscious state is trying to describe events he remembers. It is hardly appropriate for cases in which hypnosis is supposed to bring us in contact with the earlier personality itself as it then was.'*⁹

I think this point is crucial. Mid-20th century Virginia Tighe is *not* mid-19th century Bridey Murphy (speaking in the first person, remember), any more than would be a hypnotized person purporting to be someone from Shakespeare's England, while likewise slipping in modern dialect.

Bias

Nevertheless, it remains possible that Virginia could have accessed certain of Bridey's memories via spirit intrusion, and it may even be that adults are simply poorer than children at receiving information psychically. Alternately, this case illustrates that many other cases attributed to reincarnation might turn up similar "facts" but which can then be shown as cryptomnesia. Hypnotists, who earn a living by PLR, can also transmit bias:

*'Since in most cases the hypnotists expect confirmation of the reincarnation theory, at least subconsciously, they can... transmit their own convictions concerning past lives and custom scenarios of this kind, in many cases... religious convictions... in the stories told by their patients.'*¹⁰

This was definitely the case regarding Morey Bernstein and Ian Stevenson. They presumed reincarnation as an explanation, then worked back from there. And, as a post script to the Bridey Murphy case, it should be noted that, should it turn out that Virginia Tighe *did* in fact channel Bridey Murphy, then this presents a problem for the life between life scenario as presented by Michael Newton. It has to do with Bridey's LBL...

No Friends, No Guides, Just Purgatory...

Far from setting a precedent, Newton was way behind Bernstein, who regressed Bridey to the LBL state way back in the 1950s. However this state, as described by Bridey, was drab and colorless, almost a

purgatory, in considerable contrast to Newton's reports. And Bridey did not ascend to a more pleasant environment during her more than sixty years earth time between lives (i.e. 1864 to 1923) in spite of her living a fairly normal life which should not have incurred any after-death punishment. Neither was Bridey apparently involved in selecting her new body, as she stated that she did not know who selected it and made no mention of "Guides". She did not reunite with her husband, Brian, her mother or her brother Duncan either, nor any friends she may have had. She did however meet up with her father, her baby brother and a priest she knew well. There were no schools-unlike Michael Newton's scenario- or any other learning facility. ¹¹

NOTES

1. Quest4Spirit.org/ReinBrideyMurphy
2. afterlifeinquiry.com/bridey-murphy
3. Edwards, Paul *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*, p.67. Prometheus. Amherst,NY, (1996)
4. *ibid.* p 68
5. *ibid.* p 68
6. *ibid.* p 68
7. *ibid.* p 65
8. afterlifeinquiry.com/bridey-murphy
9. Edwards, Paul *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*, p.67. Prometheus. Amherst,NY, (1996)
10. thestructureofheaven.org
11. Edwards, Paul *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*, pp.72-78. Prometheus. Amherst,NY, (1996)

22. This World Is Unfit for Progress

Believers in reincarnation assert that innumerable rebirths are necessary towards, as John Hamer puts it,

*'Accelerating our 'growth' as an eternal, immortal being and the gradual progression to ultimate perfection.'*¹

However, the truth is surely the opposite. The physical world can only taint us more and it is the spiritual world alone that can provide conditions conducive to progress. This is one reason why Swedenborg did not believe either in reincarnation, or 'perfection' while encased in a mortal body. On the contrary, he asserted that

*'No angel can ever achieve absolute perfection—not to all eternity. Only the Lord is perfect, and all perfection is in and from the Lord.'*²

And on his website, leewoof.org, Lee Woofenden elaborates on Swedenborg:

*'Without the physical limitations of the material world, we have far greater opportunities for growth than we do here on earth!..practically everyone who has ever had a brief glimpse of the spiritual world...describes it as incredibly more real and alive than the material world....positively vibrating with love, light, and activity. In that greatly enhanced environment, our ability to learn and grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually vastly surpasses what is possible for us here.'*³

Thus, in the spiritual world, we can progress almost without restriction. Indeed, some spirits appear to be extremely advanced, like those who Carl and Anna Wickland dubbed the "Mercy Gang", dedicated to helping earthbound souls to ascend. These spirits disproved reincarnation by assisting souls, after their release, to immediately access the higher worlds rather than remain on earth to

obsess the living. Another similarly advanced spirit, a Dr Peebles confirmed the pointlessness of multiple earth lives:

*'In the spirit world, if we want data on a certain thing we think of it and it is all before us. There is no time, no matter, to hinder...if we want earthly experience, do you think we have to reincarnate to get that experience? No, we do not. For illustration, say one wants to know more about medicine. He then goes to a school as a student, hears everything, sees everything, and comes in contact with everything, learning it much quicker than he could grasp it on earth...We have everything in the spirit world, because everything that is invented on earth has first been invented in the spirit world.'*⁴

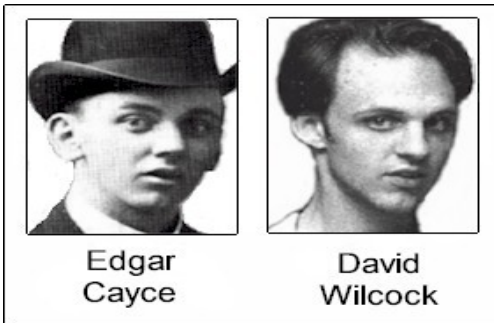
That last revelation may also explain the phenomenon of simultaneous invention, whereby great discoveries like radio, telephone, television and evolution theory occurred to more than one person at the same time.

NOTES

- 1.Hamer, John *The Falsification of History: Our Distorted Reality*, p.722. Rossendale Books (2012).
- 2.Swedenborg, Emmanuel *Secrets of Heaven* #480
- 3.leewoof.org.
- 4.Wickland, Carl (1924) *Thirty Years Among The Dead*. Global Grey Books. ebook (2018 edition).

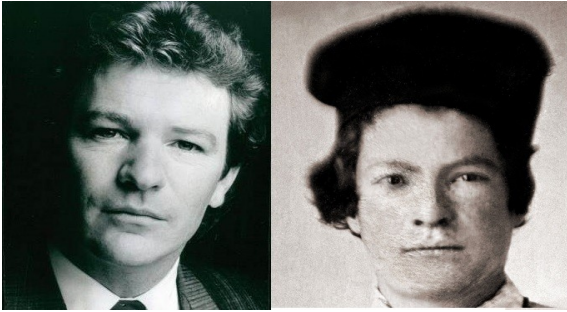
23. Doppelgangers”(Doubles)

Look at these two photos.



Another theory used in support of reincarnation is that of historical doubles, or “doppelgangers”. Thus, it is claimed that people who look like the double of someone who died well before they were born may be that same person reincarnated. Indeed, there is a “Celebrity Past Life” category on *Bing.search*, implying that such a resemblance can only be explained that way. The undeniable resemblance between the two men above is one reason why Kevin Williams, on his website *neardeath.org*, asserts that Wilcock is actually a reincarnation of Cayce.

However, consider this pair of photos.

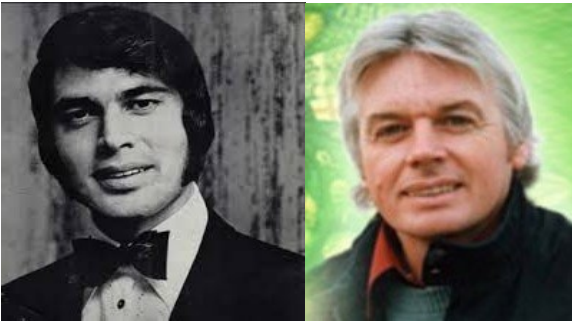


Jim Davidson

Mark Twain

Reincarnation Or Astrology?

Twain died in 1910. Davidson was born in 1953. I think most people would regard their resemblance as being equally uncanny as that of Cayce and Wilcock, possibly more so. However, no-one has suggested that British comedian Davidson was American author Twain in a previous life. There is, however, another connecting factor in both pairs of men. Cayce and Wilcock were both born under the sign of Pisces, while Twain and Davidson were both born under Sagittarius. So maybe the resemblances constitute, instead, a strong argument for astrology? Here's another example:



Englebert Humperdinck

David Icke

The men's faces are very similar in features, though Humperdinck is more swarthy, having been born in India. However, they are contemporaries of each other: singer, Humperdinck, was born on May 2nd, 1936, and is now 85, while author Icke was born on April 29th, 1952. Thus both were born under the same star sign, Taurus, and are both well over six feet tall. However, as in the case of Jim Davidson/Mark Twain, merely sharing a birthsign can be enough to mold a strong physical (and psychological) resemblance. Here are some more celebrities and their doubles:



Pretty close, would you agree? And each pair an exact contemporary of the other, which is my point. However, in case you think celebrity doubles might have used plastic surgery or whatever, check out these two pairs of non-celebs:



And, no, the two pairs above are not twins, but *twin strangers*, we are assured. However it means that you definitely don't need to bring reincarnation into it. Lastly, just for fun, a pair of even more obvious contemporaries.

A man unknowingly sat next to his doppelganger on a plane and had to take a selfie



It would be interesting to know whether any of these doubles share a zodiac sign. But, regardless, this little sample disputes the reincarnationists' claims. Even "walk-ins" are ruled out, unless they are "split-souls!"

24. Synchronicity

Kevin Williams consolidates his reincarnation interpretation of the Edgar Cayce/David Wilcock connection by examining in detail the coincidences or synchronicities in their lives. Thus, he argues, there is not only the remarkable physical resemblance to each other we saw last chapter, but the presence of certain parallels in their lives.¹ Thus, both men began psychic readings aged 23/ both had problems finding a permanent address/ both wrote how the universe was governed by harmonic “octaves”/ both men highlighted pyramid and crystal power, Atlantis, end times and Ascension/ Cayce’s father was known as ‘the Squire’, Wilcock’s father’s favorite store was Squires/ Cayce and Wilcock both moved to Virginia Beach, VA, where both sought out the Association for Research and Enlightenment (ARE)/ Cayce’s best friend was Edwin Blumenthal and Wilcock’s is Jude Goldman who, Williams asserts, resemble each other (though this may be unsurprising as both men are Jewish).

However, there are as many *dis*-similarities between them: Cayce was a meat-eater; Wilcock is Vegan/ Cayce smoked and drank to excess; Wilcock doesn’t drink or smoke/ Cayce was scrawny in his youth; Wilcock was obese/ Cayce specialized in medical readings; Wilcock isn’t medically qualified/ Cayce was financially dependent upon others; Wilcock is self-reliant. Perhaps most significantly of all, Cayce foretold his own rebirth in 2158 in Nebraska, with his twin soul, Gladys, but Wilcock was born in 1973 near New York City. After listing their “karmic” parallels Williams, paradoxically, comments that

*‘It was not [Wilcock’s]...desire to simply come through as a carbon-copy...’*² [of Cayce]

And while there may certainly be strong echoes of Cayce’s beliefs in Wilcock’s own work, much of this stuff is standard New Age material nowadays. For example, Wilcock read *The Ra Material* and *The Law*

Of One when he was 22. But as for Wilcock actually *being* Cayce, Aiza Avupre is less than impressed. She writes,

*'Wilcock approached the ARE because he apparently wanted a position there. He attended a meeting with....Edgar Cayce's son and grandson. During two hours, these gentlemen asked Wilcock several questions and realized that he couldn't possibly be Cayce. If Cayce's own son and grandson couldn't recognize Wilcock as the reincarnation of their dad or grandad that's an excellent indicator that he's not.'*³

Synchronicity As Astrology

Nevertheless, Williams' analysis of Cayce's and Wilcock's birth data is undoubtedly scholarly and certainly highly relevant, though not, I would argue, for the reasons he believes. However, to let him continue, he observes how Wilcock's time of birth -within 5 days of Cayce's- means that the Moon's position is practically identical in both their birth charts, and means that both men have the Sun in Pisces with a Moon in Taurus. Moreover, their birth years, 96 years apart, mean that both men also share a Chinese zodiac sign, the Ox. The strange correspondences continue, with the inner planets positioned close to each other with less than 8 degrees variance, and the large outer planets deviating by only 2 degrees.

Williams concludes *'The probability of all these connections being merely... coincidence is almost impossible.'*⁴ Maybe. But, to return to the remark about Wilcock not being a 'carbon copy' of Cayce, this is illustrated by the pronounced *dissimilarities* in their charts. Thus, Pluto in Wilcock's chart is at 90 degrees to Cayce's Jupiter, while Cayce's Pluto and Wilcock's Ascendant, or Rising Sign, are in total (180 degrees) opposition. These factors, Williams admits, would render the two "incarnations" liable to friction and make for differing life paths.

Unique

This only goes to show that astrology is so finely tuned that even relatively minor fluctuations in the natal chart can result in major differences in a person's destiny. This, I would submit, supports the notion that both men were quite different people, rather than one man reborn as the other. One has to ask, also, just what is it that Cayce-now as Wilcock- can achieve in this re-embodiment that he didn't last time around, and just what Karmic deficiency can be thus resolved? Cayce seems to have led a fairly inoffensive, indeed, decent life, helping others as he saw fit. Williams refers to Cayce and Wilcock sharing an "ego hologram". However, rather than being a mere clone of Cayce, Wilcock serves to illustrate the multitude of competing aspects of every human being that in fact makes each one of us quite unique.

Other Influences

Also, rather than concentrating solely upon astrology to support his case, if Williams had factored in numerology -another important occult science - some of these differences would have been addressed. Their numerology numbers are quite different Cayce's birthday is 3/18/1877, while Wilcock's is 3/8/1973. Cayce therefore has destiny number 8 ($3+1+8+1+8+7+7 = 35 = 3+5 = 8$), as opposed to Wilcock's destiny number 4 ($3+8+1+9+7+3 = 31 = 3+1 = 4$). Their birth/personality numbers also differ: Cayce is a number 9 ($1+8=9$) while Wilcock's is an 8. Lastly, we cannot understate the role of genetics, our environment and the influence of our peers-all powerful influences- in contributing to who we are, a pattern of being that seems nearly impossible to ever be repeated.

I suggest that Williams has it exactly the wrong way around. Rather, it is the very fact that both Cayce and Wilcock's were born at such closely related times that makes them so similar, though still with some notable differences: in fact, just like biological twins. That two men born under Pisces, moon in Taurus, Year of the Ox should have

similar careers and interests surely only confirms astrology, both Western and Chinese.

“Astro-Twins” As Synchronicity

Astrologers have a term for people born on the same day, but are otherwise unrelated: “astro- twins”. And while some astrologers may also believe in reincarnation (or, at least, “cycles”) many do not and these are by no means mutually exclusive. Thus, the astrologer looks for repeated patterns, rather than possible rebirth. So, in the case of astro-twins, these “twins”, though completely unrelated, may share amazing coincidences in their life patterns, with studies showing that similar events occur at similar ages through their lives. In fact, these events can be so similar that, in one instance, a pair of astro -twins

‘Went to the same school, graduated school the same year. Then both of them got married in the same year and on the same day. They in fact, married each other!’⁵

And if they have the same ascendant, then the twins would resemble each other physically, too. There are examples of famous people with uncannily similar destinies:

‘A rather eerie example of astro-twins whose lives have many similarities are Queen Elizabeth I and the English poet, critic, and biographer Dame Edith Sitwell. Both...were born on the same day, September 7, between 3:00 and 4:00 pm...Their charts... have many similarities including a Capricorn Ascendant, Taurus Moon, and Scorpio Midheaven. Artistic renderings of Elizabeth and photographs of Edith show remarkable facial similarities. Both wrote verse and suffered from periods of depression. Neither was welcomed into this world when they were born because both respective families were desirous of a first born male. Both were unmarried.’⁶

Indeed, both women were Virgos, - the “virginal” sign- which has a high incidence of people who never marry, are good at languages (due

to their ruling planet, Mercury) including English literature and poetry and, as an Earth sign, are prone to depression. These traits are thus general to the sign. And what about the following pairs of celebs who excelled in their very similar professions?

*'Physicists Albert Einstein and Otto Hahn, both born on March 14, 1879./ Singers Cher and Peggy Lee...born on May 20 and known for their "husky" sounding voices. /"Twilight Zone" creator Rod Serling and Robert Ripley creator of "Believe it or Not" were born on December 25 and both dealt with the "macabre and unusual."/ Literary giants H.G. Wells and Stephen King were born on September 21./ Actors Harrison Ford and Patrick Stewart, born on July 13, had careers that escalated after they were seen in sci-fi flicks- namely Star Wars and Star Trek./ Operatic tenors Beniamino Gigli and Lauritz Melchior... born on March 20, 1890./ Hermann Göring and Alfred Rosenberg were not only born on the same day, January 12, 1893, but died in the same prison on the same day, October 15, 1946!'*⁷

The above list are all- sometimes exact- contemporaries of each other, illustrating that you can still have fascinating parallels between astro-twins yet which obviously cannot involve reincarnation (even “walk-ins” are ruled out, unless they are “split-souls”, of course).

Events As Astrology

Even events can have astrological parallels. Here is one example:

'On May 27, 1817 a 20 year old...Mary Ashford was found murdered in... Erdington in England...strangled... her body... found near a children's home where she worked as a nurse. On May 27, 1974... in Erdington, another 20 year old girl... Barbara Forrest, a worker in a children's home, was found murdered by strangulation. It has been calculated that the deaths took place around the same time of day ...the two girls' activities on these dates were uncannily similar. Both had visited a friend and changed into a new dress in preparation for a dance later that evening. In both cases a man named Thornton had been arrested for each respective murder and in both cases acquitted.

*Even though there are no photographs of Mary Ashford, it has been suggested that sketches of her bear a remarkable resemblance to Barbara Forrest. It has also been rumored that the girls had the same birthday.*⁸

Though some of the story is rumor and speculation, the central events, including the girls' professions bear unmistakable parallels. And the name Thornton recurring is spooky, although, being from the same location, the two men may have been distantly related. But if the suggestion is that the second victim was a reincarnation of the first, then it must be asked, firstly, why a spirit would undergo rebirth only to be murdered again at the same age as last time, and why another spirit would likewise reincarnate in order to kill her again. This is, of course, assuming rebirth is a choice.

And if it wasn't a choice and Karma was being enacted, then hadn't Mary already paid of the Karmic debt by being slain, and hadn't Thornton already avenged himself? Or do we assume instead that Thornton (no. 2) was now Mary reincarnated to get her revenge on Thornton (no. 1)- now Barbara- who murdered her in 1817? Otherwise, like the astro-twins parallels outlined previously, if the two girls' indeed shared a birthday, some major correspondences in their lives might well be expected. Impelled by their shared personality traits, the girls are victims of historical (i.e. astrological) re-enactment, not re-embodiment. And, while remarkable, such cases are extremely rare- these two murders are over 150 years apart- and therefore hardly an argument in favor of reincarnation.

Selective

With this in mind, I now address that best known of all "synchronicities"-i.e. the weird similarities in the lives and deaths of Abraham Lincoln and John F Kennedy, Unsurprisingly, this forms another of Kevin Williams's reincarnation cases. Here, the astrology explanation is invalid - the only link being that both Lincoln (Aquarius) and Kennedy (Gemini) were Air signs. And at least part of

the explanation for the strange parallels may originate in the world of the occult. While this is not the place for an intensive discussion of the Lincoln-Kennedy connection, I will nevertheless consider it in some detail, as it provides a useful insight into how reincarnationists reason, and how ultimately they may be barking up the wrong tree. First, here are some of the well-known events cited as parallels:

Lincoln was elected in 1860; Kennedy was elected in 1960 / Both men were shot in the head on a Friday, in the presence of their wives/ Lincoln was shot in the Ford Theater; Kennedy was shot in a Ford Lincoln car / Both men were succeeded by Southerners named Johnson. Andrew Johnson was born in 1808; Lyndon Johnson was born in 1908 / Both Lincoln and Kennedy lost a child while serving in office / Both men were concerned with civil rights for African-Americans / Lincoln had a secretary called Kennedy who advised him not to go to the theater; Kennedy had a secretary called Lincoln who warned him against going to Dallas / John Wilkes Booth shot Kennedy in a theater and ran to a warehouse; Lee Harvey Oswald shot Kennedy from a warehouse and ran to a theater / Booth was born in 1839; Oswald was born in 1939 / The names of their assassins both contain 15 letters / Both assassins were killed before being brought to trial.

Wrong

However, some of the above claims are plain wrong: Booth was born in 1838, not 1839. Lincoln's secretaries were named Hay and Nicolay, not Kennedy. -Hay did, however, know a New York Police Commissioner named John Kennedy (!) who expressed concern for Lincoln's safety. However, this was before Lincoln's 1861 inaugural, and *not* regarding the Ford Theater, 1865.⁹ As to civil rights for African -Americans, Lincoln actually declared

*'My paramount object in this struggle is to save the union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it.'*¹⁰

Some of the other parallels are tenuous:

Booth was actually killed in a tobacco barn. Oswald used only the name Lee Oswald, while Booth called himself simply John Wilkes. The election years are unremarkable as US elections are held every four years. Oswald was arrested in a *movie* theater (cinema), not a stage theater.

Non- Parallels

There are also many *dissimilarities* in the two presidents' lives, for example

Lincoln was born in 1809; Kennedy in 1917 / Lincoln was a Republican; Kennedy a Democrat / Lincoln had two *male* secretaries; Kennedy had one *female* secretary / Lincoln was in his 2nd term of office; Kennedy was in his 1st / Lincoln was killed in April; Kennedy died in November / Lincoln was killed in a theater; Kennedy in a motorcade / Lincoln was murdered in Washington, DC; Kennedy died in Dallas / Lincoln was 56 when shot; Kennedy was 46 / The Lincolns lost 3 children altogether; The Kennedys lost 2 / Lincoln had English ancestry; Kennedy had Irish ancestry / Lincoln's killer was an actor; Kennedy's (alleged) assassin was a warehouseman / Though Andrew and Lyndon Johnson both have the same number of letters, Lyndon also used his middle initial B (Baines) professionally- hence, LBJ / Lincoln's grandfather was killed by Native Americans, Kennedy's was mayor of Boston / Lincoln had little schooling, Kennedy graduated from Harvard / Lincoln never saw real military action, JFK was a war hero / Lincoln had Marfan's syndrome, Kennedy Addison's disease / Lincoln's mother died while he was young, Kennedy's outlived him, living till her nineties / JFK had a brother as attorney general, Lincoln didn't / Booth loudly and theatrically proclaimed his deed before the audience, Oswald vehemently and repeatedly denied murder / Lincoln's father was a business failure; Kennedy's extremely wealthy.

Williams's Parallels

However, Kevin Williams introduces many lesser known, but still remarkable, coincidences, including:

Both presidents' fathers were ambassadors to England / Both presidents had teachers named William Graham / Both had political opponents named Adlai Stevenson / Both had assistants named Charles Taft / Both had military chiefs with 'George' and 'Mac' in their names / Both Lincoln's and Kennedy's successors appointed vice presidents with the initials 'HH' (Hannibal Hamlin and Hubert Humphrey) / Both successors became president themselves / Their vice presidents' successors were Ulysses S Grant and Richard M Nixon. (same number of letters and sequence) / Both presidents were over six feet tall / Lincoln's favorite actress was Laura Keane; JFK's was Norma Jean / Mary Todd Lincoln and Jackie Kennedy were both aged 23 when they married men in their thirties / Both wives broke off engagements to marry the man who would become president / Both wives spoke fluent French / Both wives had Irish relatives / Both presidents let their children play in the Oval Office and ride ponies in the White House grounds / Both wives were known for their fashion style and for expensively re-decorating the White House / When assassinated, Lincoln was in seat number 7; Kennedy was in motorcade car number 7 / Both presidents' bodyguards stood down prior to the assassination / Lincoln's main rival was Jefferson Davis and the policeman shot the same day as Kennedy was named Jefferson Davis Tippitt / Both Lincoln's and JFK's bodies lay in state on a catafalque / Both assassins were detained by a policeman named Baker / Both assassins were sheltered by someone named Paine / Both assassins associated with someone named Mudd / Both bodyguards had Hill in their names / The concession operators in the Ford theater, 1865 and the Texas theater, 1963 were both named Burroughs / After being shot, both presidents were taken to a building with the initials "PH" (Lincoln to Petersen House; Kennedy to Parkland Hospital).¹¹

This list does indeed look eerie, and is by no means exhaustive. Again, however, some of the claims don't stand scrutiny. So, for example, Officer Tippitt was named only "JD" by his parents and *not* Jefferson Davis.¹² (in any case, there's nothing too remarkable in a Texan being given the name of a Confederate leader). Norma Jean was not *known* by those names, but as Marilyn Monroe; in Lincoln's

bodyguard's case, Hill was his middle name, not his surname as in Kennedy's; Jackie Kennedy also spoke Spanish and Italian, Mary Todd Lincoln didn't; Billy Graham was a protestant evangelist-hardly a "teacher" of Kennedy, a Roman Catholic; while Luther Baker was indeed the active policeman in Booth's death, Marion Baker did *not* detain Oswald (Baker merely stopped Oswald on the Texas Book Depository stairs; Oswald was arrested later in the Texas Theater). Richard Nixon did not use the "M" (for Milhouse) politically; as for Adlai Stevenson, it's not unknown for politicians to share a famous name: for example, the UK has had two MPs named Winston Churchill.

Williams provides a comparison of prominent people in the two presidents' lives, by way of side-by-side photos. Some of these pairs of associates bear a superficial physical resemblance to each other. Sometimes they share a first or last name or even part of a name. Others, however, seem to have nothing in common, either physically or name-wise. In fact, the central figures, Lincoln and JFK bore no real physical resemblance-other than their height- and neither did their wives: Jackie Kennedy was considered beautiful, Mary Todd Lincoln rather homely looking.

Inconsequential

But there are other objections to Williams's argument, in some of the very parallels he sees as strengthening his argument for reincarnation. For, while one can just about entertain the possibility of major players -Kennedy, Lincoln, their wives, their families, even former political allies- being reincarnated together, some of the minor roles stretch credulity. For example, are we really expected to believe that a man called Burroughs spent two incarnations on this sad planet, merely contributing to the drama each time as a ticket clerk in a theater?(no disrespect to ticket clerks!) Or that someone named Baker was reborn as a policeman for the otherwise inconsequential task of questioning Oswald on the stairs? Or that a man named Paine even changed sex in the hereafter, to be reincarnated as Oswald's landlady? Did Laura Keane truly return as JFK's favorite actress, Marilyn Monroe to undergo a famous, but troubled life, ending in tragedy? And did

Evelyn Lincoln re-animate herself just to form some curious name connection a century later?

it may be asked, also, just what Karma JFK could possibly have incurred as Lincoln. In spite of Lincoln's prime intent not being to end slavery, wasn't the fact that he nevertheless *did* end it enough to satisfy any Karmic outworkings? And what of Jackie Kennedy? If her incarnations were successive, in synch with her husband's, then what Karmic obligation had not been fulfilled first time around in witnessing her husband being shot, then cradling his mortally wounded head in her arms? What about Lee Oswald? What debt of Karma, as an assassin fated to die himself, had he not resolved in his previous life as Booth? And what on earth has a Dallas police officer- J D Tippit- got to do with a political opponent of Lincoln's anyway? If Tippit was indeed Jefferson Davis recycled, he did so, not to oppose Kennedy politically (like Barry Goldwater did) but to be a humble patrolman doomed to die in mysterious circumstances on the same day as JFK.

Rationale

Additionally, several of those Lincoln/JFK coincidences can be rationalized by the fact that Jackie Kennedy was a known admirer of Lincoln and indeed studied him. Williams himself acknowledges this, noting that Lincoln was a hero of hers, his funeral inspiring her model for John's own ¹⁷. Furthermore, in studying Lincoln, Jackie would surely have studied Mary Todd Lincoln also and may well have echoed her actions, if only unconsciously: lavishly redecorating the White House; copying Todd's stylishness; letting the children play in the Oval Office and ride ponies in the grounds, and perhaps even selecting the model of the Ford limousine. Is it stretching things, also, to imagine Lincoln's restless spirit- via his violent death- still close by in the White House, influencing candidates from the beyond?

On his website, Kevin Williams cites maybe half a dozen cases of strange links between well-known historical people. However, this seems a less than impressive case for reincarnation, given the sheer number of famous people and the extent of history. The Lincoln-

Kennedy link is undoubtedly plentiful in such coincidences, but such correlations are probably unique in history and some of them were almost certainly manipulated to be that way, as we shall see shortly. They do not prove reincarnation, at least, not as a common or natural occurrence. And, of course, the fifty or so years between the presidents' incarnations (i.e. 1865-1917) invalidates both the Druze model at one end of the scale, and the many hundreds, even thousands of years reported elsewhere.

Garfield-McKinley Parallels

John Leavy showed ¹³ that weird coincidences can be found for the two other assassinated presidents, William McKinley and James Garfield:

Both presidents were Republicans who were born and bred in Ohio / Both were Civil War veterans / Both served in the House of Representatives / Both were ardent supporters of protective tariffs / Both supported the gold standard / Both their last names contained eight letters / Both presidents were slain during the first September of their respective terms. Both presidents were shot twice / Both presidents initially survived the shootings, dying a considerable time later / Both assassins, Charles Guiteau and Leon Czolgosz, had foreign-sounding names / After their assassinations both Garfield and McKinley were replaced with their vice presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Chester Alan Arthur / Both Roosevelt and Arthur were from New York City / Both Roosevelt and Arthur sported mustaches.

However, McKinley (1843-1901) could not have been a reincarnation of Garfield (1831-1881).

The Marilyn/Diana Connection

There are also some uncanny parallels between Marilyn Monroe and Princess Diana:

Both were born on the 1st of the month / Both had 19 letters in their birth names. / Both were abandoned by a parent when young: Marilyn by her father; Diana by her mother. / Both had unhappy childhoods. /

Both married on the 29th of the month to men twelve years older. / Both had unhappy, troublesome marriages that ended in divorce. / Both were world famous icons of their time. / Marilyn called herself the Queen of Diamonds; Diana, the Queen of Hearts. / Both died at the age of 36 in August. / Both were subjects of the Elton John song, *'Candle in the Wind'*. / Both women's deaths have been the subject of conspiracy claims.¹⁴

Again, however, this cannot be reincarnation, as Diana was born a full year (July 1961) before Marilyn died (August, 1962).

Synchronicity as Conspiracy

Even allowing for mundane explanations for some of the Lincoln-Kennedy parallels, there remain some disquieting correlations. However, it still does not follow that these prove reincarnation. Kent Daniel Bentkowski suggests that the Kennedy assassination was a masonic ritual killing. The numbers 11, 22 and 33 are important in masonic lore. Consequently, the venue and date of Kennedy's assassination are no accident:

*'The 11th month, 22nd day, at Dallas, Texas...nearly exactly on the 33rd parallel of latitude...in Dealey Plaza... named after a 33rd Degree Freemason...his killing... the ancient fertility oblation of the 'Killing of the King.'*¹⁵

The number three, or trinity, is likewise of powerful occult significance. Thus, Dealey Plaza is built on a three acre plot, and overlooks the Trinity River, where three streets -Commerce, Elm, and Main- form a three-sided triangle converging in the "triple underpass". Three shots were taken at Kennedy, from three probable locations (the Grassy Knoll, the railroad bridge and the Dal-Tex building). Three men known by three initials each- Kennedy (JFK), Johnson (LBJ), and Oswald (LHO)- were central to events. Three "tramps" were arrested and released. Three hours after JFK had been pronounced dead, the news was broken. And perhaps most ominously of all,

*'JFK was hit in the exact three places as was the legendary Freemasonic figure Hiram Abiff; in the back, throat, and in the rear of the head.'*¹⁶

Even Kevin Williams hints at a pre-determined, occult possibility, in citing that the addresses of Ford's Theater (511 10th St.) and the Texas School Book Depository (411 Elm St.) both contain the number 11.¹⁷ The TSBD even has 666 in the phone number! The above facts also shed light on the initials "PH." correlation: Parkland Hospital simply had to figure in events as it was the nearest hospital to rush the mortally wounded Kennedy.

Things Fall Apart

Another major point is that many of the Lincoln-Kennedy coincidences fall apart if Oswald is taken out of the equation, and there is certainly much "reasonable doubt" of his involvement. Forensic evidence revealed he never fired a rifle that day.¹⁸ Oswald was only an average shot in the marines and expert marksmen have never duplicated his supposed feat.¹⁹ Moreover, the supposed murder weapon's telescopic sight was broken and both the bolt and the trigger mechanism were faulty.²⁰ It is almost certain, too, that the fatal wound to JFK was caused by a hollow point ("dumdum") bullet, which Oswald's rifle was incapable of firing. It is also very unlikely that Oswald killed Officer JD Tippit either, as some witnesses described *two* killers and others only one killer who, unlike Oswald, was short and squat. Also, cartridges were found and Oswald's gun was a revolver, which doesn't eject cartridges.²¹

Masonic Knowledge?

JFK's killers could easily have framed any suitable "patsy", which Oswald claimed to have been. Otherwise we must believe that Oswald was not only familiar with the wounds inflicted upon Hiram Abiff back in the days of King Solomon, but that, given a cheap, faulty rifle by the elite for what was (to them) so important a mission, then developed into a crackshot enough to reproduce all three wounds

from a distance on Kennedy! Presumably, Kevin Williams believes that supernatural forces were working to bring about these synchronicities. Is it therefore unreasonable to believe that truly dark forces could be colluding with their powerful servants on Earth, and how such a combination could “arrange” for the killing to fulfill many aspects otherwise put down to “coincidence”? Brentowski believed in such a possibility:

‘Everything that the Global Elite do is carefully planned many years in advance. This allows time for future politicians to be ‘groomed’ to accept the position that has been handpicked for them...I was told in 1988 that George Bush Jr. would be President at some point in the not too-distant future. Knowing how hated his father was at the time, I doubted this to be the case. Then he bought the Texas Rangers baseball team, and soon became governor of Texas. When this happened, I doubted no more.’²²

And if the world of the occult is indeed involved, players and events could be coordinated to a set agenda. Carl Wickland wrote how

‘Obtruding spirits influence susceptible sensitives with their thoughts, impart their own emotions to them, weaken their will power and often control their actions...’²³

And these are just your average earthbound spirits. Worse still,

‘A great many, of these discarnates...are calculating, very wicked and dangerous, and will seek to harm you, and more, if allowed opportunity. Think of Hannibal Lecter; dangerous, even behind bars...’²⁴

Imagine then what the malevolent entities, ritualistically invoked by Kennedy’s murderers, could bring about by obsessing their targets and influencing them in decisions on who to associate with, where to work, who to befriend, even who to marry. Meanwhile, their human collaborators, with limitless supplies of money and power to bring about such aims, could easily manipulate events by adding or

removing people at will, just like in the movies *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen*. UFO hunter, John Keel, told of how he would randomly choose a motel to stay in, not even knowing the room number he would occupy. However, on checking in and entering the allocated motel room, he would frequently receive a perfectly timed phone call warning him off.²⁵ The forces concerned must therefore either have influenced his mind and that of the hotel clerk's by psychic means, or else foreseen his future choice, or both. Likewise, if JFK's killers could manipulate events to their satisfaction, such arrangements could explain, among other "coincidences":

Lincoln and Kennedy's assassinations occurring on a Friday / their fathers being ambassadors to England / 33rd degree freemason LBJ succeeding Kennedy as president / JFK occupying a Ford Lincoln and car number 7 in the motorcade / The bodyguards standing down / Oswald being killed before his trial / the murder of patrolman J D Tippitt .Even the persons behind recurring names, such as Charles Taft and William Graham, could be manipulated to create a mystique or fulfill some sick humor and perhaps it was thus no coincidence that Evelyn Lincoln showed up for interview as JFK's secretary. Having done so, it was a done deal that someone with that name would be hired by Lincoln's admirer, JFK, perhaps with Jackie's approval. That there was a conspiracy to kill Kennedy I have no doubt. Even after the assassination, the airwaves went down for around twenty minutes. When they came back on line, there was heard the morse code for "Victory". Besides which, if Oswald was merely a "lone nut", why were there a plague of unexplained deaths after the assassination, when Oswald was, too, dead?

*'The list of those dead and dying prematurely ...freak deaths and suicides, strange accidents and homicides, involving individuals associated with the assassination and its coverup... boggles the mind.'*²⁶

Avatars ?

There is a further possibility regarding Lincoln-Kennedy, and other connections presumptuously cited as examples of reincarnation. This is the idea of the *avatar*, or what is called in Eastern religions, the *bhodisattva*. This is a spiritual being who selflessly incarnates at certain times in history, to act as a guide for humanity. Obvious examples of this would be Jesus or Buddha. The main difference with the Eastern concept, is that such an avatar incarnates repeatedly, i.e. *re*-incarnates, rather than the Christian once-only Messiah.

Eighty years ago, Charles Tweedale wrote of his experiences with the spirit world. A Church of England minister, Tweedale nevertheless was also a Spiritualist, denouncing the stuffy, official church's opposition to spirit interaction. Like Anna Wickland, Tweedale's wife, Madge, was a fine psychic medium. Tweedale wrote of visits by the spirits of Stradivarius and Chopin, both prominent figures in the world of classical music. Tweedale reveals how even benevolent spirits like these can influence the living. He was told by the spirit of Stradivarius that the great violin-maker had been with him since he was nine years old, which helped explain Tweedale's life-long interest in playing and making violins. Stradivarius also said that he had influenced Charles and Madge to name their daughter Dorothy, meaning "gift of God." Tweedale explains,

*'He was with her, not only, as he said "when she came", but before, just as in Bible instances it is narrated that people were ordained before their physical birth for certain work in this mortal life.'*²⁷

Chopin, in turn, assisted Dorothy with her piano playing. With her mother, Dorothy played a key role as a psychic and helped Stradivarius, Chopin and others, such as the Bronte sisters, to manifest. It can be seen, then, that spirit influence may play an important role in human destiny, without bringing reincarnation into things. However, such spirit input does not imply predestination. Rather, there may well be key roles for certain people as pioneers and

leaders, while the general populace might content themselves with the no less important, but more mundane, tasks that keep a society running: child-rearing, building, manufacturing, nursing, administrating, etc.

In the key roles, we might see both Lincoln and Kennedy, as most people would regard both as playing pivotal roles in improving the lot of ordinary Americans, and especially African – Americans. If this indeed is so, many of the Lincoln-Kennedy coincidences could be seen as pre-ordained as well as pro-active. However, there might have been a combination of both positive and negative forces at large- the proverbial Light versus Dark. With this in mind, the idea of Lincoln and Kennedy being incarnated just once each is perfectly compatible with Tweedale’s notion of the spirit world’s influence. Like Ghandi, Schweitzer or Martin Luther King, their lives and works are an example to others. There might well have been parallels in their lives, but that does not mean that Lincoln and Kennedy were one and the same spirit reincarnating.

NOTES

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25. Child Prodigies

Believers in rebirth sometimes cite child prodigies as evidence of reincarnation. Mozart, who composed his first classical piece when he was only five, is the most often referred to. Another example is that of William Hamilton who was a master of mathematics and fluent in several languages by his early teens. However, such precocious genius is as rare as a butterfly in winter. But let us consider Mozart as the classic child prodigy. His genius from a tender age is undeniable, but this fact in itself presents a problem for the reincarnation fraternity. Because, now we have to ask, just *who*, then, is he supposed to have been in a previous life?

Singular

Mozart's talent was, indeed, singular and, rather than being another composer recycled, surely such remarkable talent argues for his uniqueness? As musical forerunners, only Bach, Handel and Vivaldi would fit the bill in terms of prowess and creativity. However, Handel is out, as he died in 1759 while Mozart was born in 1756 (unless, of course, we have another "walk-in" on our hands!). Bach died in 1750, but I would reject him too. His music, great as it is, is characteristically religious and devotional, which Mozart's seldom is, apart from the *Requiem* mass at the end of his life. And, though Bach gave the world some of its finest oratorios, his work has little of the operatic, whereas Mozart excelled in opera.

That leaves Vivaldi, who died in 1741. And he did write an opera or two (well, 46 to be exact!) Oh, and lots of concertos, again like Mozart. However, I would reject Vivaldi also, for, with respect to his fans, unless his musical brain expanded massively between incarnations, he just didn't have the sheer class and musicality of Mozart (with notable exceptions: the *Four Seasons*; the exquisite *largo* from the Lute Concerto in D major; the *allegro* from the Mandolin Concerto in C) Besides, Vivaldi was Italian and Mozart was

Austrian (though Vivaldi actually died in Vienna, he spent most of his career in Venice). And anyway, wouldn't Vivaldi have come back as an *Italian* child prodigy, ready to take on again the classical mantle for Venice?-In fact, one candidate for this would have been Salieri who was held up to be Mozart's chief rival in the movie *Amadeus* but who no-one otherwise even remembers nowadays. Like Vivaldi, Saltieri was born in Venice (in 1750, nine years after Vivaldi died) and even shared the first name Antonio!

Encouraged

It should be remembered, also, that young Mozart had the best tuition. Born into a musical household -his father, Leopold, was a fine violinist- and the boy was encouraged from an early age. He also had time for writing and performing to the exclusion of all else as there was no TV, computers or even compulsory education to distract him in those days. (Actually, spirit influence might provide some explanation here too. Hence, the composers listed above could have been inspiring at least some of the compositions of young Wolfgang Amadeus from the afterlife, where they might still be composing).

And other composers were also inspired from an early age. Beethoven was an accomplished pianist by his late teens, and the finest of his day prior to his deafness. Mendelssohn, too, composed brilliant works in his late teens (*Fingal's Cave*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*). Tchaikovsky began hearing music in his head at a young age, once breaking a pane of glass with his hands as the muse possessed him. And who shall we say their modern counterparts,-uniquely brilliant talents such as Lennon and McCartney, Bob Dylan and Noel Gallagher- are reincarnations of? If you are going to say those great classical composer, it wouldn't therefore be very patriotic for Russian, German, Italian and Austrian greats to inhabit latter day British and American geniuses. Sorry, I'm just not convinced.

Complex

Unique genius shows up in other fields, too. The young English psychic, Matthew Manning could replicate brilliant and complex paintings from scratch, fully in the style of Picasso, Matisse, Goya, Klee, Durer and others.¹ Can it be maintained that such powers derived from previous incarnations of those people? Once again, this would present a problem since Klee(1879-1940) and Picasso (1881-1973) were almost exact contemporaries of each other. Again, though, Manning might well have been open to spirit influence. Stephen Blake cites a case by writer Nandor Fodor that was claimed to be one of reincarnation. In this case, two well known figures of the past- the ancient philosopher Galen of Pergamon and the Christian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg- both appeared to 19th century American teenage psychic, Andrew Jackson Davis. After these encounters the boy, who had little formal education, began a career as a healer and prodigious writer of philosophy and mysticism, culminating in the notable work, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations*.

A New York University Professor, one George Bush, applauded the clarity, scope and range of Davis's book. Indeed, the content and style of prose was held to be identical with Swedenborg's, whose spirit Davis claimed to be possessing him. Fodor remarked that if this were not the case, how could a simple country boy have accessed material found only in aged volumes, whose existence he could not possibly even have known about? Under hypnosis, Davis exhibited xenoglossy, quoting accurate Hebrew. As we have seen, this phenomenon is heralded by advocates of reincarnation as strongly suggestive of a past life. However, Blake illustrates why such a notion must be rejected. This is because, if Davis had been both Galen and Swedenborg reincarnated, then Swedenborg himself (born in 18th century Sweden) must have been Galen (born in ancient Greece) reborn. However, Davis claimed to have encountered the spirits of both men as a youth. As Blake concludes,

*'If such is the case then Swedenborg, Galen and Davis must be three individuals with distinct spiritual identities.'*²

Savants?

And there is another intriguing possibility, at least, for cases of *acquired* genius. Paul Wallis examines the case of a boy of ten who was hit on the side of the head with a baseball. A year later, something in his brain gave him the ability to know instantly what day of the week any date in any year fell on, to compute the days lapsed between any two random dates and to know what happened on any date! It is called Acquired Savant Syndrome and happens owing to “disinhibition” in the frontal temporal part of the brain. In another case, a student who had flunked Mandarin, woke up from a coma to find he was so fluent in the language that he ultimately went to Shanghai to host a game show! With reference to the present chapter, a girl artist, likewise “disinhibited”, underwent a radical change in artistic ability that impressed art critics.³ Probably the most famous case is that of Dutch psychic Peter Hurkos, who fell from a ladder and “awoke” his latent psychic powers.

Reversal

And what about the reverse process? James Webster cites

‘The converse situation entailed in the painful degeneration of the powers of Cicero or Leonardo da Vinci in their modern reincarnation in this or that celebrity raises a problem which the reincarnationists have not apparently faced!’⁴

And even in reincarnation research, this reversal may be present. For example Ian Stevenson believed that one subject, named “M,” had reincarnated as the son of a liquor-store owner because of alcoholism in his past-life.⁵ However, there also exist cases known as “frank possession” whereby a nondrinker, out of the blue, suddenly becomes alcoholic, or even a junkie.⁶ I would suggest that in Stevenson’s case above, the spirit of an alcoholic (I avoided the obvious pun) was simply attracted to the liquor store and used “M” as a vehicle for his continued addiction: psychics have observed such spirits hanging

around bars. Likewise, the “frank possession” suggests another such spirit, even more dramatically transferring his taste for booze to his mortal victim.

NOTES

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26. Deja Vu

The haunting feeling known as *deja vu* has been experienced by most people at some time in their lives. Not surprisingly, this phenomenon has been presented as evidence for reincarnation. However, such experiences are better explained by the nature of the spirit world, together with the presence of its inhabitants around us. Lee Woofenden offers a perfectly scientific explanation. Echoing the communication from the spirit of Dr Peebles we saw already (Chapter 22), Woofenden updates the message for our Information Technology (IT) age. IT, he affirms, is lots more advanced in the spirit world, and information is stored in that world's very mechanism, which is, in effect, an infinite data-bank. Copious amounts of data can be stored there, free from the mistakes and corruption that impair our still clumsy equipment. So sophisticated is this spirit world technology, that it is

*'A simple matter to transfer the entire memory of one person's life into another person's mind. This is the most basic explanation of... "past life regression"... Sometimes...memories of a departed spirit's life... can cause feelings of déjà vu. Or, when a more complete set of memories is transferred, it can cause us to "remember" whole life experiences of someone who lived in the past. This is not necessarily the past life of the actual spirits who are around us. Once a spirit gets access to another spirit's memories, those, too, can easily be transferred to the mind of someone still living on earth.'*¹

This situation corresponds nicely with Sheldrake's "morphic resonance" and what are referred to as the "akashic records" also. The more psychic the person on this side of the spiritual veil, the more attuned they are to spirit influences and the greater the likelihood of connecting to more than just a glimpse of these data banks. As we have seen, young children are among the most psychic of people and may well- encouraged by parents or other adults- interpret such information as having happened to themselves. This could also

explain those instances whereby two people access the same “past life”.

While we must always be careful of the veracity of channeled messages, I will finish with a quote from one because it seems to confirm the above. The communication may be important because it was sent through reliable medium Anna Wickland. But even more impressively, the channeled spirit claimed to be none other than H.P. Blavatsky. The substance of the message was that, through finally realizing the nature of spirit communication, Blavatsky had now renounced the Theosophy she taught while on earth, together with its central belief of reincarnation. She now explained that spirits

‘Speak to you by impressions and their past will be like a panorama. You feel it, and you live over the past of spirits and you make the mistake of taking this for the memory of former incarnations..It may... be the subconscious result of reading a book about the place (deja vu); of visiting it in sleep; of rapport with a deceased person who once lived in it; of telepathic contact; or of precognition.’²

Regarding the precognition she mentions, it is important to stress that spirits can see the future, as Charles Tweedale shows repeatedly in his books- in fact, those spirits who visited Tweedale’s family even saved his life on two occasions! This is because spirits are eternal and live in a timeless space where they can view events unfolding in our world, but from a panoramic view. A good analogy here is that of a winding river, where we mortals are in a boat, and cannot see around the bends in front of us. The inhabitants of the spirit world are like the crew of a helicopter flying overhead, which can easily see what is around those bends. As Blavatsky outlined, when we experience *deja vu*, it is possible that we have traveled at sometime in the astral body and have foreseen, or even experienced, future events as projected there *before* we then experience them on earth, hence the intense feeling of familiarity. Alternately, we may have tuned into the mind of a spirit who can foresee events.

Misfiring

More practically, some neurologists believe *deja vu* to be due to a misfiring in the brain, in which events are perceived to be out of sequence. And, actually, *deja vu* and other mental feelings can even be artificially induced in the laboratory. Neurologist Michael Persinger, through stimulation of the hippocampus and amygdala, produced *deja vu*, temporary paralysis, voices in the head, the smelling of strange odors, the sense of presences and shadowy figures, auditory and tactile hallucinations, amnesia, missing time and religious feelings.³ This finding might help explain other features of the phenomenon.

NOTES

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27. “PastLife” Memories Can Be Transplanted!

We have seen throughout this book, how obsession by spirits has been misinterpreted as (in Ian Stevenson’s words) “suggestive” of past lives. But there is another phenomenon that likewise presents a problem for the reincarnationists. This involves cases of organ transplants, after which the recipient begins to have strange and unfamiliar memories, changes of taste, and even personality changes. Remarkably, these new traits can almost always be traced back to the donor of the organ. Consider the following examples from the *Namah* Journal, whereby

‘The cases...came to light after mysterious behavioural symptoms of recipients compelled a breach in the traditional donor-recipient anonymity.’¹

Here is a small sample of such cases:

Case 1. A Connecticut, USA, woman, Claire Sylvia, received a heart from an eighteen year-old male from Maine. After the operation, Claire developed an uncontrollable urge to drink beer and eat chicken nuggets with green peppers, none of which she had liked before. She also suffered recurring dreams about a mystery man named Tim L. Upon finding an obituary in a Maine newspaper, she located the heart donor...named Tim, whose family confirmed his fondness for chicken nuggets, green peppers and beer.

Case 2. A 47 year-old white male foundry worker received the heart of a 17 year-old black male student, and subsequently developed a taste for classical music. Contrary to the white man’s assumption that a black person would prefer rap music, the donor actually loved classical music, and in fact had died on the way to his violin class!

Even more dramatically,

Case 3. An eight year-old girl received the heart of a murdered ten year-old girl and began having recurring vivid nightmares about the murder. A psychiatrist concluded that she was witnessing actual events. The police used the detailed information provided -which included the time, the weapon, the place, the murderer's clothes, even the victim's last words- to find and convict the killer!

Hallmarks

The above examples recall vividly the identification of the living with the dead we hear of in "past life" cases. But obviously, these cannot be past lives as the donor and recipient are fully contemporaries of each other. The young girl who received the murdered girl's heart has a parallel in the story of a three year old Druze boy who identified his "past-life" murderer, indeed bearing the birthmark on his forehead where his killer's ax had struck him after a fight. The boy also located where his "former" body was buried.

Although the story *'Lacks lots of evidentiary details'*² we may be generous in accepting it as genuine, but, I would argue, as an example of a young child channeling the murder victim's restless spirit. The hallmarks are there: the psychic young child; the violent death and ensuing earthbound victim; even the exclusively same-sex reincarnation sequence espoused by the Druze. Similarly, the recurring dreams regarding Tim L and the black music student may have been induced by the young men's spirits being rendered earthbound by their fatal accidents.

Verifiable

Believers claim that the only way obscure knowledge can be transmitted is via reincarnation. However, there is also a wealth of verifiable information in the annals of Spiritualism. Indeed, this is how the Wicklands were able to find the family of Charlie Herrman whose spirit had been trying to reincarnate in Jack T. Seven years after the publication of *Thirty Years Among The Dead*, Wickland received a letter from a neighbor of Herrman who recognized the name, town cited and description of Charlie and his affliction (i.e. smallpox). The letter was published in Wickland's second book. *Gateway of Understanding*.³ Elsewhere, too, Wickland mentions actual names spirits gave him, such as Grace Brusted of Boston and Jack Finch of Madison, Wisconsin and sometimes street addresses for readers to verify.⁴ Other times though, Wickland just gives initials and names of towns.

Spirit Sleuths

And Spiritualism, too, has accounts of ghosts solving their own murders. For example, in 1977, Teresita Basa was murdered in her apartment. After six months, the only lead police had was a diary entry mentioning the initials AS. Then they got a phone tip-off regarding a colleague of Teresita's named Allan Showery. The call was traced to Jose and Remy Chua. According to Remy, Showery had gone to Basa's apartment to fix her TV but murdered her instead and stole her jewelry. When asked about the source of her information, Remy claimed that she had been possessed by Teresita, who revealed the details of the crime, which Jose confirmed. Upon searching Showery's apartment, police found Teresita's ring and pendant. An incredulous Showery confessed and was jailed for 14 years!⁵

And such reports have featured throughout history. For example, when Ann Walton in 17th century England, became pregnant by the man whose servant she was, he arranged for another man to murder her. The woman's spirit then haunted a third man miles away, who had no connection to the crime or either her employer or the killer. The woman told of how she was killed with a miner's pick, manifesting visually the several wounds on her head and body that had killed her. She told where she was buried, together with the shoes and stockings of her murderer, who could not wash her blood from them. Upon investigation her body was found, together with the murder weapon and the blood-stained garments. Her employer and the hired killer were both executed. ⁶

A Living Heart Transplant!

There have even been murderers who have confessed after being haunted by their victims. ⁶ While, this may well be dismissed as being fabricated in the killer's own mind by guilt and remorse, it again cannot be ascribed to past lives. The only other real explanation is the spirit theory. Transplanted memories with personality changes, together with ghosts solving their own murders, would in other circumstances be claimed to be past-life memories, when it is clear that they cannot be: the donor and the recipient, the murdered and the murderer(s) are all contemporaries of each other. And how would the reincarnationist interpret the following conundrum- a "living heart transplant"?

'Jim... received a heart and lung transplant from a young woman who had just died. Since Jim's old heart was still robust, it was transplanted into another man named Fred. After this domino transplant, Fred, who was formerly laid-back, began exhibiting the... aggressive behavior of Jim. During intimate moments, Fred would call his wife "Sandy", much to the consternation of his wife Karen.

*Jim's wife's name was Sandra. On the other hand, Jim became morose and sullen after the transplant... It was discovered that Jim's donor had been a shy, soft-spoken young woman who... had committed suicide in despair over a lost love.'*⁷

This really complicates things, and also might help explain the belief in ancient times, that it was the heart and not the brain that was the seat of consciousness. I think one of two processes could be at work here. The first involves some natural- if esoteric- process, whereby the organ retains memories of its previous owner, just as some believe that water retains memories (the human body is 70% water). This is called “genetic memory” or “epigenetic” and was observed in mice who were conditioned to fear the smell of cherry blossom: this trait then being inherited by successive generations⁸. Again, this process may be akin to Sheldrake’s “morphic resonance”.

The second possibility is the spirit explanation. In this scenario, the deceased donor might hover around the hospital in which they died -many of violent death- and had their organs transplanted. The spirit may then attach itself to the organ recipient, transferring its memories and even its likes and dislikes, as we saw with Kum Kum inheriting her mother’s food tastes (Chapter 17). Then, under the general anesthetic necessary for a major organ transplant, the astral body may separate from the physical. As Sue Allen explains,

*'During the time that the astral body is separated and not yet fully connected there is the potential for...a passing spirit, of which there are many in a hospital, to attach itself.'*⁹

The donor is thus open to attachment or invasion from these spirits, which are- I must agree with Susan B Martinez- *'Donor spirits, wandering spirits, lost spirits. Not past lives.'*¹⁰

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28. Follow The Money?

It might be asked, if reincarnation is not the “fact” that many claim, just why there always seem to be plenty of writers that argue in favor of it? I think there are several reasons.

First, there is a misconception about what the evidence actually shows and which, hopefully, I have dealt with comprehensively so far. Next, there is an everyday familiarity with reincarnation and Karma terms, such as, ‘in another life...’ or ‘what goes around, comes around’. Thirdly, there is a fundamental difference between Westerners concepts of rebirth, as opposed to Eastern ones. For example,

‘In Hinduism...the cycle of rebirth is generally a fearful thing...but among North Americans and Western Europeans, reincarnation is often given a very different spin: it represents new and positive opportunity. It’s not a burden, but a comfort positively associated with new possibilities for self-fulfilment...a reflection of our “buffet” approach to life..the more variety and diversity, the tastier this meal’¹

Ignorance

Next, there is the quite common notion that reincarnation represents the only possible afterlife: the spirit world of the LBL being only a temporary sojourn away from this. Thus, any arguments against rebirth is perceived as tantamount to preaching complete annihilation, whereas, as I hope I have shown, nothing could be further from the truth. Next, it has to be said, there is an underlying ignorance among researchers and psychologists- whether willful or otherwise- of how the spirit realms actually work, and to which I have referred to (see Chapters 16 and 22). The direction of our souls is ultimately onwards and upwards, not round and round.

Lucrative

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it's a lucrative subject. Reincarnation is the stuff of best selling books (just ask Shirley McLaine). In the West, famous cases claiming to be past life memories are the stuff of best-sellers, TV appearances, even movies. Then there's the throng of devotees, like those who headed to Dr Michael Newton's practice and the patent rights in selling on his techniques to other researchers and institutions. Think of TV shows and documentaries occupying prime advertising space. Think of New Age magazines and websites with their ads from those hypnotherapists who are practicing Past Life Regressionists. There's even a recent movie franchise centered on a reincarnating dog!

Ian Wilson observed that a sizeable majority of Ian Stevenson's Indian/Sri Lankan cases involved children of a lower caste remembering lives as members of a higher caste (including Jasbir Jat, who we saw earlier) even though the demographics are the exact opposite, i.e. there are far more poor people than wealthy in India.²

*'There are some minor exceptions but the trend ...is so marked that it surely indicates only one thing: a motive. In India or Sri Lanka, a poor family has much to gain and little to lose if they represent their son as the reincarnation of a recently deceased member of a wealthy family... the rich family...will try to do something to improve the lot of the child and the whole poor family.'*³

And certain cases do seem not so paranormal- especially involving families living close by each other- fabricated, even. And it need not involve money. For example, 6 year old Ashok Kumar was murdered in 1951. Six months later, it was claimed that Ashok reincarnated as Ravi Shankar, complete with birthmark. "Ravi" described his murder by two men, Jawahar and Chaturi, who had previously been arrested but then released. Ashok's father, Sri Jageshwar Prasad, confirmed Ravi's testimony. However, Wilson notes that (1) Both families lived only half a mile away from each other, and (2) that three relatives of Ravi Shankar testified that Ravi had been groomed by Jageshwar

Prasad, prior to the reincarnation story, despite Ravi's father's claim that his son and Jageshwar Prasad had never met. Wilson's suggestion regarding the truth compromises another "proof" of reincarnation:

*'By virtue of Jageshwar Prasad's ardent desire to bring his son's murderers to justice, it is too easy to see the story of Ravi Shankar as a maneuver between Jageshwar Prasad and the father of Ravi Shankar to get the suspects to be arrested again. The birthmark...may very well have been purposely created as additional proof.'*⁴

Yes, even birthmarks may not be reliable. In another case a poor boy, Sunil Dutt Saxena, claimed to be the reincarnation of wealthy Seth Sri Krishna. This, despite being informed by the doctor that one Sheveti Prasad had trained Suni, to pretend that he was Seth Sri Krishna reincarnated. Sadly,

*'Stevenson preferred to view the doctor as a suspect, concluding, against all odds, that the case was genuine.'*⁵

This stubborn attitude on Stevenson's part was evident, too, in the case of Edward Ryall, who claimed to have been a 17th century English farmer, John Fletcher, described in the book *Second Time Around* (1974). Stevenson continued to believe the story even though it had been debunked by historians, some of whom Stevenson had actually been in contact with.⁶

Incentive?

Another unlikely scenario is that we would need to believe that, in a sizable majority of the India cases, the spirits were demoted by Karma to suffer a lower caste incarnation. But why? These people had already suffered a violent death which should have repaid any Karmic debt. And, like Sobha Ram, they seem to have been fairly normal people otherwise. When even the case studies of professional researchers like Stevenson can create suspicion, it is no wonder that countries like India and Brazil- despite the prevalent belief in reincarnation among large sections of their populations- have ruled

evidence related to “past lives” to be inadmissible in their courts of law. Jasbir Jat believed he had been poisoned at the wedding ceremony by a man to whom Sobha Ram had loaned money. Thus, Jasbir had a strong financial incentive to remain the reincarnation of Sobha Ram because the man in question gave Jasbir 600 rupees- a good deal of money in the early 1950s.⁷

‘Nudged’

And how many reincarnation believers are aware that, in 1964, Ian Stevenson was awarded a grant of over \$1 million for his research by attorney Chester F Carlson-an enormous sum in those days, and a powerful incentive to justify the research money by “finding” for reincarnation! Even by Jim Tucker’s day, research money was still forthcoming:

‘While reading one of Ian's books, his wife saw an article in the local newspaper about a grant that Ian's division had received. She nudged Jim to look into the division.’⁸

And in November (2021), the Bigelow Institute for Consciousness Studies awarded Bruce, Leininger, James’s father, \$20,000 for his essay, *Consciousness Survives Physical Death: ‘Definitive Proof’ of Reincarnation.*⁹

Some people might deem such a sizeable award for an essay a wee bit suspicious.

“Indulgences”!

Book reviewer Faye Leadbetter took Michael Newton to task, upon reading how

‘In the spirit world the spirits gather in small clusters...What an awful afterlife! I became suspicious ... so I googled the author...he was a founder member of the Church of Scientology! And...for \$4,000

he will teach how to escape the torment of being stuck in one of those clusters after you die! Bargain!’ ¹⁰

The Catholic church used to offer this sort of thing, called “indulgences”. I have been unable to confirm Newton’s links with Scientology so it would be remiss of me to criticize him in that respect. That said, however, the large price tag Faye quotes for ”de-clustering” patients who can afford to pay does have unfortunate parallels with that church, which offers to ‘clear’ clients of troublesome ‘engrams’ - at a price, of course. Scientology also accepts reincarnation as a given, so might well encourage confirmation bias in the hypnotist, albeit unconsciously. Also interesting in this regard, is that Newton stumbled upon this LBL spirit world

‘During the process of performing hypnoRegression on a patient while regressing him to a past life, to attempt to identify the source of the problem.’ ¹¹

I am not singling out Scientology for criticism here. Indeed, much of the doctrine of reincarnation is founded upon the idea that spiritual defects accrued in past lives are causing the hang-ups in this life (this is the notion behind Karma, after all). To resolve them can be expensive and, indeed, PLR, can certainly be very lucrative, especially among those less scrupulous practitioners.

‘Since therapists charge by the hour, the need to explore centuries instead of years will greatly extend the length of time a patient will need to be "treated," thereby increasing the cost of Regression.’ Secondly, the therapist and patient can usually speculate wildly without much fear of being contradicted by the facts.’ ¹²

Dispute

In this light, it's unsurprising to find dispute over who discovered a life between lives (LBL) Michael Newton took the credit, and a handsome paycheck in sales of his popular books. However, a full fifteen years before Newton, Canadian psychiatrist, Joel Whitten wrote on the LBL state, even entitling his book *Life Between Life!* Likewise, Dolores Cannon published *Between Death and Life* ten years before Newton's first book, complete with "soul groups" and "councils". Ian Stevenson, also, recognized a LBL state seven years before Newton, as we saw in Chapter 12. So these previous books will have put the ideas of LBLs "out there" to settle into the subconscious and the collective unconscious. This is how memes form and bandwagons begin to roll.

*'The reincarnation fad...was not the only New Age fad that Cannon... made her own... she claimed Nostradamus was providing her with interpretations of his prophecies...she claimed to be in contact with beings who created our planet...she is the poster child for the... New Age hallmarks: hypnosis and past life regression, channeling, Nostradamus, UFOs and aliens... and a method for healing every disease known to man. She even added the word 'quantum' to her healing technique, though there is nothing quantum about it at all.'*¹³

Thus, there appear to be plenty of memes to go around. Dolores Cannon, indeed, seems to delight in keeping up with the latest trends. Thus, we have the popular New Age notion of putting "quantum" before everything, as our Dolores coins the term "quantum hypnosis". However, as mathematician Stephen Blake reminds us,

'All they have done is use the jargon of quantum physics to dazzle their readers....If you read any books with the words 'quantum' and 'reincarnation' in the title, you will find that the mathematical content is precisely zero, not because the authors wish to make their books more readable, but because there's no physics behind their theories.'

Then there's the "observer" effect, as in buildings don't appear till we collectively witness them. Next come the alien abductions, implanted memories of past lives. time shifts, whereby Nostradamus can simultaneously transmit messages to her, while still being alive in the 16th century! Whatever...(yawn).

NOTES

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29. Karma Debunked

'Eye for eye makes the whole world blind.' Mahatma Gandhi.

“What goes around, comes around”- that’s the Law of Karma. And fair enough, you may say. And it is undoubtedly true that the fear of retribution can encourage good behavior in many people: if I do a bad deed, my actions will come back on me, if not in this life, then in a future one. Likewise, a good deed earns a good deed in return. Also, rebirth is at least a preferable alternative to the Christian and Muslim notion of eternal Hell.

Who Decides?

But hold on. Just who is operating this so-called law? The Law of Karma is not like the Law of Gravity. Gravity is a *natural* law. It says that if Mother Teresa and Ted Bundy are traveling in the same airplane and the engines fail, then gravity will bring both, good and bad, crashing to earth. Karma, however, is a *moral* law, and moral laws require a judge or overseer:

*'The notion of moral evaluation and the assignment of karmic outcomes through reincarnation is rational only if a personal and moral evaluator and agent is the fulcrum of the system.'*¹

And if that ‘evaluator’ judges *us*, then who in turn judges *them*? And just what laws are held to be the standard? For much of history, laws were held to be the will of God or the gods. For example, in the Old Testament it was prohibited to be gay, to work on the sabbath, or for a woman to lose her virginity before marriage. The penalty for all of these was death. So, were the people who stoned the accused to death liable to Karma for their actions- to be, presumably, likewise stoned themselves in their next life? But why? They had no choice in the

matter: it was God's will. Nowadays we in the West are thankful that secular laws have replaced such bloodthirsty theocratic ones. But the practitioners of Islamic sharia law would say we are wrong, and that they are merely carrying out God's will.

The Dark Side

And this superficially respectable law of Karma hides a very dark underbelly indeed. In 1999, English soccer star, Glenn Hoddle caused a storm of protest from disabled people's charities when he implied that cripples must have accrued negative Karma for past life sins. However, Hoddle was merely taking the doctrine of Karma to its logical conclusion: if Karma is real, then cripples must, therefore, have accumulated bad Karma through past-life actions. Shirley McLaine went even further than Hoddle when she declared that Holocaust victims might likewise be the authors of their own misfortune.² Small wonder then that this belief is the reason that, traditionally, there has been very little in the way of charity in India, the home of Karma. Worse still, you might actually be hindering their progress, because, as Barry Beyerstein suggests,

*'It follows from these views that I ought not to give a donation for African famine relief because those starving wretches must deserve that fate for having blotted their copybooks last time (or times) around. Helping the afflicted just thwarts their Karma, you see.'*³

Paralyzed

It is ironic that 'Karma' literally means 'action' when, in actual fact, Karma

*'Paralyzes the initiative of millions. Those imprisoned by it rarely strive for social improvements or justice.'*⁴

And when, as McLaine outlines, Karmic retribution is visited upon whole populations, a truly immense mathematical problem arises. The difficulties of how such Karma *en masse* could possibly be allotted can be seen in natural disasters. Paul Edwards cites the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which killed or injured between 60,000 and 100,000 people and made many more homeless. Others, however, benefited from the disaster. Edwards asks

*'How and where were the bad deeds of those killed and injured and the good deeds of those spared registered? How and where were the penalties and rewards decided? And just how did Karma determine the geological conditions whose existence is not disputed as the "natural" ...cause of the disaster?'*⁵

Thus, we are required to believe that all the inhabitants of cities and regions similarly hit by natural disasters, before or since- such as the tsunami in 2004 that killed hundreds of thousands around the Indian Ocean and left many more destitute- were somehow reincarnated together, some to die, some to suffer death or injury, and some to benefit from the others' misery,-each to fulfill their Karma.

Actors

And what of man-made disasters, such as the bombing and shelling of civilians in wars, still going on today in Ukraine, Yemen and Israel, or in the Blitz during World War 2, when thousands of British people in cities like London and Coventry were killed, horribly maimed or left homeless. Or what about the hideous retaliatory Allied bombing that destroyed much of Hamburg and Dresden, the latter full of refugees-unarmed men, women and children. Likewise Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Tokyo . What about all the domestic pets and other animals, either wild or in the zoos? Were they all fulfilling their negative Karma too? How could bombs and incendiaries, dropped in anger and hatred (and, indeed, fear) upon their targets, often blindly at night,

possibly discriminate between the guilty and the guiltless? Just *who* could execute judgement with such a slide rule?

And what of the perpetrators of such atrocities and those who gave the orders? In Hoddle's and McLaine's scheme of things, they too must be helpless actors in a role. For the next logical step in the machinations of Karma is to believe that, as Edwards puts it bluntly,

*'Since the Jews deserved extinction the Nazis were not really criminals and should not have been prosecuted.' Moreover, the many Nazis who escaped deserved to escape..'*⁶

In August, 1969, members of Charles Manson's 'family', brainwashed with hatred, drove to the Hollywood home of film director, Roman Polanski and his beautiful actress wife, Sharon Tate. Polanski was not at home, but the crazed youngsters found Sharon entertaining some friends. Not only did the 'family' murder every one of them, but one girl slashed Tate's belly open with a hunting knife. Sharon was eight and a half months pregnant. Both she and her unborn baby died that terrible night.

Can it be seriously maintained that this sick deed was fulfilling some Karmic payback? Even if Tate were somehow culpable via some vague former existence, was her baby also? And does that mean that her murderer- a young woman herself- must undergo such a fate in her next life? And does that also mean that another unborn child, merely incidental in both crimes, must be ritualistically killed? In what warped version of morality could such an outcome be said to be just and fair?

Perpetual

The process is perpetual, can never be resolved and actually overturns all our cherished notions of justice- the very thing that Karma is supposed to settle!

*'If someone lived his life as a compulsive thief, it would be necessary for that same person, in a future life, to be subjected to numerous robberies. But the thieves fated to participate in this 'karmic payoff' would be sowing negative Karma that they, too, must reap in future lives, making it necessary for a third generation of robbers to emerge.....So, the process would multiply itself exponentially into an inescapable, never-ending, infinitely-enlarging, impossible-to-solve scenario.'*⁷

Murderers, rapists, child molesters, wife beaters and arsonists are no longer culpable for their offenses. They are merely pawns in the cosmic game of Karma, meting out retribution upon their victims, and by incurring negative Karma, then becoming victims themselves the next lifetime around.

Dizzying

As another example, In October, 1966, The UK's National Coal Board allowed a mountain of coal slurry to slide onto a junior school in Aberfan, Wales, killing 116 children. 145 survived, as was their Karma, obviously (though many suffered psychologically). Some of the dead were siblings of the survivors but in different classrooms. Survivors and dead occupied the same classroom, but different seats. Are we still to believe that some power allocated these positions, saying, 'you're dead, kid' to one child, 'but you can live' to another? As Edwards reflects, *'It makes one dizzy'*.⁸

Even reincarnation believer, David Icke, recognizes Karma's inherent contradiction: ceaseless offense followed by retaliation. But more than this, he suggests, this endless tit for tat would be like the Creator punishing themselves over and over:

*'How can Everything That Is face Karma for actions it has taken that affected itself? Take a simple example. You hit someone with a baseball bat and the "perfect Karma" would be for someone to hit you with a baseball bat. But all that's really happening is that Oneness is getting hit twice because it is both the giver and the receiver. That is why the idea of Karma is a constructed, not a natural law.'*⁹

Counter Productive

Ask yourself, would you want to come back to this sad planet for the sole purpose of taking revenge on someone who wronged you, however great their offense? Such thinking is utterly counter-productive, for it would be *you* who must suffer a further incarnation in the process in order to right the said wrong. Then you yourself would then owe a karmic debt to your victim in turn, and so on, endlessly: the ultimate catch-22! And does this remorseless Law of Karma make any allowances for age and immaturity? I am sure that most older people will reflect with guilt and remorse upon the misdemeanors, even felonies, committed in their youth -things they would now never dream of doing. For instance, Nick Turse interviewed a young American soldier in Vietnam who drove the butt of his rifle into a peasant woman's nose, laughing as the blood gushed from her injury:

*'Decades later, he could no longer imagine how his nineteen-year-old self had done such a thing, nor could I easily connect this jovial man to that angry adolescent with a brutal streak.'*¹⁰

This was, of course, far from the worst atrocity committed in that hideous war. I quote it to illustrate the whole transformation from youth to mature man, together with the wisdom attained since. Karma's relentless demands would have us throw away such priceless wisdom and begin all over again, to answer for things we have long repented and, even more to the point, would certainly never repeat.

Vessels

And Karma does not appear very efficient at all as a force for purifying the soul, as

*'The... world population... is already a frightening 8 billion and growing faster and faster by the day. Where are all these people coming from? If Karma is true, surely people should be reaching perfection and escaping the cycle of life and the world's population decreasing?'*¹¹

Ironically, India and China with a population of 1.3 billion each are largely Hindu and Buddhist and thus believers in Karma and reincarnation. Such large populations are utterly selfish for two main reasons: firstly, in providing vessels for Karma in the shape of children: (no children = no reincarnation = no Karma); secondly, it consigns a vast proportion of these children into commodities for cheap labor, which rich nations are happy to exploit. And Karma's effects must be subtle indeed, negligible even, as Ian Stevenson himself observed:

*'In the cases that I have investigated, I have found no evidence of the effects of moral conduct in one life on the external circumstances of another. When I examine the cases that include the feature of a marked difference in socioeconomic status between the families concerned, I can discern no pattern indicating that the vicious have been demoted in this respect and the virtuous promoted.'*¹²

Stevenson, of course, studied intensively among the cultures that embrace Karma.

Ripples

Even on a more everyday level, the administration of Karma involves a whole universe of practical and moral problems. A popular website details the sheer complexity, the intricate knock-on effect upon others, and the inevitable injustice arising merely from one preordained automobile accident. In the following imaginary scenario, a pedestrian is knocked down and badly injured:

*'This accident will also heap bad fortune on the driver who was somehow compelled (unknowingly) to strike this person... charged with careless driving causing injury, he's lost his license and has feelings of horror...as he relives the accident. Likewise... the victim and his family who now have to take time off work to nurse him back to health. The absence of this person and their caregivers from work cause problems for their employers...the negative influence of this one accident ripples out into the wider world, untold people are suffering needlessly just so that one person could be punished for something he did in the past.'*¹³

Devastating

Dale DeBakcsy disputes the notion that Buddhism and Karma are either the zenith of spirituality, or contribute to the welfare of their adherents. He relates how a female student in a Buddhist retreat sought help from the monks with memorizing for tests. The monks responded by informing her that, in a former life, she had been a homicidal, book-burning dictator whose Karma was to be learning challenged. DeBakcsy responds

'Not, "let's look at changing your study habits", but rather, "Oh, well, that's because you have the soul of a book-burning murderer."...To a kid who earnestly believes that these monks have hidden knowledge of the karmic cycle, it is devastating. She was convinced that her soul was polluted and irretrievably flawed ... this is the dark side of

Karma – instead of misfortunes in life being bad things that happen to you, they are manifestations of a deep and fundamental wrongness within you. ¹⁴

Sadly, such a heartless philosophy is the logical conclusion of the Karmic mind-set. I found this review of Ruth Montgomery's *Strangers Among Us* (1979) by someone called Aelys. Aelys was being physically abused at home, so he desperately wanted to forfeit his body to a "walk-in" spirit, as Montgomery discusses in the book. However, this was not forthcoming and Montgomery's commentary made things even worse:

'Especially hateful is that she tells us that children who are molested by their parents are being molested as punishment for something they did in a past life. She says they deserve to be molested and that the parents are doing God's will and will be rewarded.' ¹⁵

Which goes to show how a belief in Karma reverses ordinary human decency, even towards the defenseless. (Incidentally, the book's back cover predicted nuclear winter, pole shift and Atlantis rising, while California disappears beneath the ocean. So much for Ruth's "Guides" who she claims channeled the book!)

Justice? What Justice?

For a system that is supposed to guarantee justice, Karma seems oddly inefficient or, at least, heavy handed, for example:

'A boy remembered a life in a village not far away in which he had lost the fingers of his right hand in a fodder-chopping machine. The child was born with an intact left hand but the fingers of his right hand were missing.' ¹⁶

Seeing that Karma had already punished this boy so horribly in his former life (presumably for an offense involving severing someone's fingers in the life before that), why then punish him *twice* in this way, in successive lifetimes? This doesn't strike me as being just and fair at all.

Worldly Origins

Many people use the terms 'Karma' and 'reincarnation' interchangeably. But, as we saw already (Chapter 12) Karma was not a concept among the majority of races who believed in reincarnation. For the accompanying belief in Karma, we have to look to the Indian subcontinent with its remorseless caste system. Yet, even among Hindus, the doctrine only developed over time (see also Chapter 31):

*'Between 800 BC and 500 BC, Hinduism began to change under the impact of two new, rival religions,-Buddhism and Jainism....In this period, important social and philosophical changes occurred. The caste system was established and the learned Brahmin, often a priest, became the leading figure in society. The doctrine of reincarnation...became part of the creed. A further addition was the concept of Karma.'*¹⁷

And, like all religions, there are political, social and economic elements involved:

*'It is clear to anyone with only a superficial understanding of the history of divinely mandated moral systems, that they always bear a striking resemblance to, and offer confirmation of, the social systems in which they emerged.'*¹⁸

Crowd Control

The idea of Karma was, and still is, very useful for social control. And part of that control is to convince people that the hand that they are dealt is only what they have earned. As Kathleen Meadows explains, Karma was

*'Embraced with enthusiasm by the then aristocratic class. It also effectively cemented one's birth class for a lifetime... it served too to explain the apparent injustice in the distribution of wealth and resources. Living in poverty, disease and pestilence, you were undoubtedly less than honorable in your past life...a perfectly packaged and circular rationalization.'*¹⁹

As well as class discrimination, Karma promotes sexism. In some Hindu scriptures, a woman must first be reborn as a man before she even has a chance of salvation! And in addition to its inherent class and sex discrimination, Karma is also suspiciously racist:

*'The Hindu social hierarchy emphasized that those belonging to higher castes typically bore lighter skin tones than those in lower castes. even in South India, rich people often tend to be lighter-skinned... A majority of South Indians hail from the Dravidian ethnolinguistic group, who typically display darker skin tones than Indo-Aryans. Particularly in North India, dark-skinned individuals are often viewed as "dirty" and of a lower status than their lighter-skinned counterparts.'*²⁰

Divide And Rule

However, this caste system ultimately proved to be India's downfall as it helped cause her large population of 200 million, in the mid-18th century, to be ruled over by Britain, which had only 7 million people. Thus,

*'Coming from a society that was divided by class, the British tried to equate the caste system to the class system.'*²¹

Classic “divide and rule”. Note here, too, that India’s present day population- at some 1.3 billions- is more than six times its 18th century population, so even within reincarnation cultures, the number of people is far greater than the available souls (see Chapter 13).

I am not here singling out Hinduism for criticism. Christianity also contains texts that condone racism (the Old Testament is full of accounts of genocide against non-Hebrews, e g 1 Sam. ch 6 and Num ch 32), sexism (e g, 1 Cor. 11:2-10 and 1 Tim. 2:9-15) and class divisions (e g, Eph. 6: 5-9 and Col. 3:22-4) I cite Hinduism purely on account of its inherent association with Karma- a doctrine which has, in turn, given rise to much Buddhist and New Age thought, and, I would insist, has been a cause of great misery to humankind.

Anyway, just when did Karma originate? The first life you ever lived must surely have been without any Karma to accumulate. Moreover, in our hunter-gatherer past you had to obey the rules. There was little to steal and if you committed murder or adultery you faced death or (possibly even worse) banishment from the tribe and consequently put at the mercy of ferocious beasts who might tear you to shreds, or other tribes who might kill or enslave you. No ten commandments were necessary- you knew the laws and kept them if you had any sense. So, whence came Karma?

No Help Here

As we saw earlier with population growth, some will bring in the animal kingdom. However that doesn’t really help the case for Karma. Animals act mostly upon instinct and have no concept of evil, unlike humans. How would an animal, bound by its instinct and its place in the natural order, “upgrade” to the human kingdom? And if evolution is correct, how would fish life upgrade to amphibian to

reptile to mammal, etc?--by what conceivable pattern of good behavior? And are we, in that case, to turn a blind eye to all the abuse animals suffer not only in the natural world, but at the hands of humans : the cruelty of battery farming and vivisection, hunting, even horse and dog racing. Are we really to believe these poor wretched animals are paying some Karmic debt?

In everyday life, does the Karma believer throw fate to the four winds: not practice birth control? (pregnancy or not, it's your Karma); speed in their car ('que sera, sera') not buy a lottery ticket? -if you're fated to win, you'll no doubt find a winning ticket!; not attend a job interview? (it wasn't meant anyway); not turn up for that date (ditto)? I think if your reasoning is that everything is meant to happen, then you will lead a very sheltered life.

And at the other end of the spectrum, - i.e. involving star-people- What possible Karma would such advanced beings, who would surely want for nothing, possibly accumulate? And why should they have even heard of Earth, across the immensity of space? And what of the ultimate question? If Karma is the supreme force for meting out justice and retribution, is God (or the gods) also answerable to it? In the Old Testament of the Bible, we find a veritable catalog of offenses-indeed, atrocities- by God (aka The Lord) Would He not be liable to karmic payback for either his own direct actions or the incitement to act on his own behalf via His "chosen people" and their leaders? After all, Karma is supposed to be objective in its rulings, is it not?

Genetics

And there is another consideration to throw into the mix, namely heredity. Religious precepts have frequently had to make way for scientific knowledge, and Karma is no exception, as James Webster points out:

‘Indian religious thinkers are realizing that this belief does not make sense when attempts are made to blend it with modern biology and genetics. Even the uneducated among them are asking ; “If I owe my characteristics to two parents there must be no place for a third force (the effects of my previous actions). Therefore it can only follow that previous actions cannot exist.’²²

The Real “Karma”

For the above reasons, then, I don’t believe that Karma represents true justice, However, some people who experience NDEs start believing in reincarnation. But are features of NDEs like the “life review” only really useful in the context of reincarnation? The answer is emphatically no. I suggest that, rather, the life review is an integral part of after-death judgement, and a painful, yet infinitely more positive one than returning to earth. Besides, NDEs, like reincarnation norms, are cultural (see Chapter 12). Also, from my reading of the life review, only the present life is reviewed anyway, and, as I recall, this was the case in the original books by Dr Raymond Moody.

It should be remembered that phenomena such as NDEs, like UFO sightings and alien abduction accounts tend to become memes after a while, so it isn’t surprising that there will be areas of overlap between accounts. It’s all related to the psychology and/or cultural expectations of the person experiencing the NDE. Thus, you might expect a Tlingit to experience some component of “past lives” to be reviewed as part of his or her NDE, whereas you would not expect a Sioux to, as reincarnation isn’t part of their culture. It would be the same with a Druze, as opposed to a mainstream Sunni or Shiite Muslim.

However, I completely understand people’s need to believe in a “judgement” after death, followed by some form of recompense. The good news for them is that the spirit world metes out justice in its own, I think, much more satisfying, way. Indeed, Spiritualism lists among its Seven Principles, personal responsibility and compensation and retribution hereafter, for misdeeds done while on earth. Indeed,

conditions can be so harsh for malefactors that rebirth may even be preferable! (see Chapter 16). Many reports during NDEs mention a life review and judgement after death, when

*'We are confronted with our felonies and misdemeanors. We cannot hide from them or lie about them. Worse still, we have to undergo the consequences of our actions ourselves, as if we were standing in our victims' shoes and the events were happening to us. This is reported to be something of a "baptism of fire" and we can imagine... how much intense mental suffering and remorse may be involved.'*²³

This sounds much like the "judgement" spoken of by religions and, in particular, the notion of "as you sow, you shall reap". If indeed these types of NDEs, at least, reflect some type of truth, this would, I believe, amount to the real application of Karma, but with the difference that you will know exactly why you are being judged, i.e. on the solitary earth life you remember fully, not some vague past life. Would this not be so much fairer? Also, people return from this "life review", utterly transformed, their lives infinitely more purposeful than living more lives on earth. Additionally, the experience is toward a positive outcome rather than endless debt followed by repayment, as Dennis B Trumble explains:

*'The life review is for educating us about ourselves: why we are the way we are; what were our motives behind our actions; how did our lives impact others; how we could have done better; and what we can do to correct aspects to ourselves which are not compatible with life on the Other Side. We learn these things in order to become a better person.'*²⁴

And I believe we will remember what we learn, in stark contrast to the totally pointless learning that we just forget again, as in the reincarnationist's doctrine.

Positives

This earth life, however, is far from all negative, for it is possible to see beyond the daily trials to the bigger picture. And, as in pregnancy, our travails can produce a wonderful result at the end of it all. Likewise, if our one earth life is to reach its full potential through the widest range of talents and personalities available, there will, unavoidably be obstacles and adversity to overcome:

*'Is a sea captain involved with 'bad Karma' because he has to struggle with storms...? Are a strong character's early struggles, which he later looks back on with gratitude, the expression of an evil influence? Is it 'misfortune' to become an orator through overcoming a stammer?'*²⁵

As a prime example of this, take Beethoven (the German composer, not that Saint Bernard dog in the movies). He was not only, arguably, the greatest of all classical composers, but he revolutionized music. Yet Beethoven had to be born when he was to have achieved this, in an age of revolution but still extremely poor medical knowledge. The former inspired his own groundbreaking compositions; the latter struck him with deafness and condemned him to a solitary existence within himself. Yet it was this titanic struggle with what, for a musician, was the greatest of handicaps that begat his greatness. Do we put this down to "bad Karma"? Surely not, for the rest of the humanity has benefited no end.

On a more everyday level, I will continue to believe that most of the trials of human life are on account of grossly imperfect man-made systems, and not due to the whims of the gods or the spiteful designs of Karma:

'Reincarnationists fail to think this theory through. Did the spirit world make the earth peoples so unequal?...We construct an earthly

*existence of haves and have nots. We're uncomfortable that we like that so we construct these ridiculous and rather banal explanations for these inequities.'*²⁶

A Necessary Evil?

I happen to believe that this life is our one and only sojourn into this world, and thus our existence may only have begun with our birth. However, it is possible that we could be eternal beings volunteering for a life here, for whatever purpose. In this latter scenario, rather than perpetuating karmic debt, there is indeed choice: the choice of contributing to human advancement. Think about it. What was said about Beethoven, applies also to the less celebrated lives of human history who, nevertheless, greatly aided our progress. For example, if all those people who were his contemporaries had not worked during the Industrial Revolution in the wretched factories and mines- many of them children- barefoot and living in hovels, then we in our own time would not be living in relative luxury. From their great sacrifice, we benefited. Their miserable existence was necessary for our comfortable one.

This still goes on, of course, in many parts of the world. The poor work cheaply so we can have our smart phones, laptops, cheap food and clothing. Is this situation so that their bad Karma can feed our good Karma? Surely not. Rather, terrible conditions of production were, and still are, a necessary evil towards growth and progress, and not a result of some Karmic pay-back. And even the worlds where star-beings live may likewise have gone through the phases of great change and revolution that led to their technological advance. One hopes that on their worlds they have done away with both the excesses and greed of capitalism and the tyranny of the communism that tried to replace it.

The Antidote

Ultimately, however, the antidote to Karma is undoubtedly forgiveness. If I don't seek revenge, the problem is resolved. Forgiveness trumps Karma, for it ends all at once the self-perpetuating cycle of offense followed by retribution. And, as Christ, Gandhi, Mandela and John Paul II all illustrated in forgiving those who injured them, it also comes from a higher place..

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30. Ancient Wisdom?

Hindu Knowledge Not Unique

As we saw with the law of Karma, so-called “eternal truths” can turn out to be suspiciously man-made. It has likewise been claimed that the Hindu scriptures, especially the Vedas, contain exclusive scientific knowledge. Again, I am challenging Hinduism only because of both its powerful modern day link to reincarnation and its antiquity. Hence, some people conclude that if Hinduism’s holy books are such a source of knowledge, it follows that, by association, they may be likewise trustworthy concerning reincarnation. American author Mrs. Wheeler Willax summed up this position, when she praised

‘India... the land of the great Vedas, the most remarkable works containing not only religious ideals for a perfect life, but also facts which all the science has since proved true. Electricity, Radium, Electrons, Airships, all seem to be known to the seers who found the Vedas.’¹

Let us then look at favorable passages from the scriptures themselves. We read.

Medicinal herbs...like a sharp and strong moderator, destroy... disease. (Rig Veda 10/97/12)

This seems to be a fairly accurate reference to the antibiotic properties of certain plants, (although many ancient tribal peoples knew of this factor and had a resident medicine man who derived his knowledge from the spirit world). Likewise,

The Earth, with all its waters, revolves round the sun. (Yajur veda 3/6)

And certainly this scientific fact contrasts sharply with the Bible concept that the earth is set upon pillars (1 Samuel ch 2 v. 8). Likewise, the New Testament ascribes the cause of illness to devils. (To be totally fair to the Bible, we have seen already how some very serious mental disorders and chronic physical conditions are the result of spirit attachment). But if you don't have an exorcist handy, you could try plant remedies, as recommended here in the Vedas:

*'The cure of all diseases whether they are physical, mental, ethical and spiritual, lies in nature. .. God Almighty has created most useful herbs which are panacea for all sorts of diseases.'*²

Elsewhere in the Vedas, we read that

*Modern science has calculated the age of the Earth at about 4.6 billion years, very close to the estimated 4.3 billion years of ancient Indians nearly 15 centuries ago*³

Joccolliot enthuses that

*'The Hindu Revelation (the Veda) is of all revelations the only one whose ideas are in perfect harmony with modern science.'*⁴

It has also been claimed that the speed of light is mentioned in the Rig Veda. However, Awdhesh Singh looked up this claim, both in the Rig Veda itself and also related websites, but unsuccessfully:

*'I did not find any reference anywhere of the so called shloka which calculates the speed of light.'*⁵

Nevertheless, we will continue with this alleged Vedic knowledge. Devi Chand⁶ powerfully translates parts of the Atharva Veda, as referring to electricity and its applications, including

Powerful engines, illumination, agricultural machinery... manufacturing plants, biomedical engineering. (Chapter 1: Hymn VII, Verse 2) Two speedily moving forces of attraction and repulsion propel the electric current...in this pleasant plane or car... various kinds of liquid fuels....all productive works of the manufacturer depend upon waters flowing down with speed. (Chapter 3 :Hymn XXXI, Verse 1).

At face value, this list seems, indeed, startlingly impressive, and describes the polarities of electrical force, hydro-electric power, lighting, tractors, manufacturing, airplanes, cars and gasoline production. Even more dramatically,

Piercing weapons like the thunderbolt, smash into pieces the vast armies of the enemy... electrical currents of high voltage, safely carried by electric wires...kill many enemies in the war... (Chapter 2: Hymn XV, Verse 6)

This modern sounding terminology could well describe the military use of electrical energy, possibly atomic. Chand concludes

*'This proves that ancient seers in India knew much more than modern scientists know. Atharva Veda was spread by travelers towards the West during past 2000 years and most of its knowledge now lies in Europe...The intellectual development of our life was completely blocked because for a long time we were an occupied nation by some foreign power or the other.'*⁷

Incomprehensible

This is incomprehensible. Firstly, if the Europeans really had obtained this Vedic knowledge, it would have brought the Industrial Revolution forward by nearly two millennia! Secondly, how could such an advanced society be subjugated by *anybody* in history before the present day? It would be like a medieval army

with swords and longbows subjugating a modern army! As for airplanes, a session of the Indian Science Congress on Vedic science was told by a former pilot, Anand J Bodas that aircraft technology existed 7000 years ago, quoting the book *Vymanika Shashtra*. However, four decades previously, five young Indian scientists in aeronautical and mechanical engineering at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore debunked such claims In a paper entitled *A Critical Study of the Work Vymanika Shastra* that none of the technologies documented in the book would allow an object to fly. ⁸ Moreover, there are lines in these scriptures that are less than convincing of advanced knowledge. For example,

Here is the...the beautiful horse of iron of high speed... (Chapter 2: Hymn XV, Verse 6)...O electricity...your circular motion like the wheel of a chariot... (Chapter 3: Hymn:XXI Verse 9)

One might expect such an allegedly advanced society to use sophisticated language. Yet the above recalls 19th century Native Americans describing the unfamiliar train as an “iron horse”! (No disrespect to First Americans). And why on earth would chariots co-exist with cars and sophisticated missiles? Also, if chariots were indeed outmoded why would you use the wheel of one (rather than a car wheel) to describe circularity?

Wrong, Wrong and Wrong !

But in any case, according to Sulaiman Razvi’s translation,⁹ the Atharva Veda got some of its of science very wrong. For example, that:

The Sun goes around the Earth (Atharva Veda 6.8.3)

A bull holds up the Earth (Atharva Veda 4.11.1)

Gâlâsha (urine) is a potent remedy (Atharva Veda 6.57.1-2)

(A toast to your health with galasha, anyone? I think I'll piss, I mean, *pass!*)

The other Vedas fare no better:

The Earth has four corners (RigVeda10.58.3)

Earth is fixed with supports (Rig Veda 10.149.1)-shades of Samuel 1 ch 2 v 8!

The Earth is spread like a tent -(Yajur Veda 5.16)

The Sun is a chariot pulled by horses (Rig Veda 1.50.8, 1.50.1)

The sky is supported by a pillar. (Rig Veda 6.72.2)

Similarly, with other scriptures:

The seasons are caused by the sun's rays (Brahmanda Purana 1.2.24.32-35).

The diameter of the sun is half that of the moon(Brahmanda Purana 5.24.2).

Jupiter is smaller than Venus (Matsaya Purana 128. 64-65).

The Moon is made of water (Vayu Purana 1.53.57).

The Moon travels faster than the Sun (Sriram Bhagavatam 5.22.8).

Conversely, there is knowledge missing which one might expect the compilers of advanced scriptures to have known. For example, it was the British who measured the exact height of Mount Everest and other Himalayan peaks for the first time and discovered important ruins, like those of the first great civilization of India, Motanjo-Jaro ¹⁰ (One might ask also, in passing, why didn't at least one person throughout such an ancient people recall a "past life" as citizen of that great civilization, together with details of where the ruins were located?)

The Greeks Had Lots Of “Firsts” Also

The ancient Greeks also possessed much scientific knowledge that has been rediscovered in modern times. Thus, Democritus predicted atoms / Hippocrates showed that disease was a natural process (rather than a punishment from the gods)./ Aristotle introduced the idea of the earth as a globe./Aristarchus argued that the planets orbit the Sun, which was the “central fire” of the cosmos, and placed the then known planets in their correct order of distance around it. / Erastotenes calculated the circumference of the Earth by measuring the different lengths of shadows cast by vertical poles at different latitudes at midday on the summer solstice..¹¹

The Greeks used observation and mathematics, rather than ascribing their knowledge to revelation from their gods. This shows that accurate scientific knowledge could be obtained independently of other cultures and is therefore unremarkable that an older culture was sometimes accurate. Additionally, the mistakes in the Vedas listed above disproves claims that Greek knowledge derived from Eastern writings. This is because, had the above mathematical knowledge been cited in the Hindu scriptures, the Greeks would not have needed- sometimes painstakingly- to rediscover it for themselves.

Race Memories ?

However, there is the possibility that some holy books contain race memories, or knowledge imparted by the “gods”. The Mahabhurata appears to speak of flying vehicles, missiles and even nuclear weapons. These sagas of the gods forming the first civilizations, but also fighting each other, have made a comeback in recent years, with authors like Zecharia Sitchin, Alan Alford and Paul Wallis convincingly taking up the idea of ancient gods. This may well explain the following scripture, also from the Athurva Veda:

Like a radiant spot, it is well placed in the heavens, then with a high speed, the terribly destructive missile, made of iron,

possessing speed of electric power, crushing the serpent natured enemy, (Hymn XV Verse 4)

This ‘serpent natured enemy’ occurs, of course, in the Bible, and Alan Alford believes it to be a reference to Enki’s forces who were based on the Nile (which looks from the air like a huge serpent)¹². Satan simply means ‘enemy’ and originated when the gods Enki and Enlil fought each other. Thus Enki was the “satan” (i.e. enemy) of Enlil, a.k.a. the ‘Lord’ God. The Biblical destruction of Sodom was part of this war and has all the hallmarks of being the result of an atomic weapon (for example, unnatural levels of radiation around the Dead Sea; strange blackened “volcanic” rocks where there are no volcanoes; folklore about an “evil wind”)

Cross-Pollination

But, even among religions that do not overtly espouse reincarnation, don’t the esoteric traditions within them typically teach the doctrine, as in Kabbala and Gnosticism? It should be remembered that most such traditions were formed through cross-pollination of ideas. Thus, Judaism and Zoroastrianism collided with Greek, Egyptian and Indian thought, producing a synthesis of ideas. And there are cultural factors even in inner traditions, despite the lofty pedestal some people give to them. Moreover, esotericism has contributed very little to our scientific knowledge. For example Gnosticism cites the seven aeons that corresponded to the planetary spheres, and thus have strong similarities to the Babylonian scheme of the seven heavens (the Jews were captive in Babylon). However we know nowadays that Uranus and Neptune are also planets and that the Sun and Moon are not. Also, are we supposed to take seriously, for instance, the Gnostic *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, which has Jesus as a young boy killing his friends and creating live birds out of clay?

Remember, too, Andrew Jackson Davis's description (Chapter 16) of how Gnostics, Egyptian mystery cults, Pythagoreans and Platonists, still congregated in their own cliques (at least, up until the late 19th century when Davis described them). Their ancient wisdom, thus, hadn't gotten these believers very far up the spiritual planes.

A Fantasy

Nevertheless, it might be objected, some of the world's most enlightened people strongly believed in reincarnation, e.g. bodhisattvas. Were they just completely deluded as to the fact that they could return in human form to assist humanity awaken? Freke and Gandy respond amusingly, if irreverently, to this notion in *The Gospel Of The Second Coming*. when they have "Jesus" say

*'The whole idea of "ancient wisdom is a bit of a fantasy...Just because someone's been dead a long time doesn't mean they're any more insightful.'*¹³

Besides, it is *quality* not *quantity* of evidence that counts. If you could be transported back into the Middle Ages, into the home of a learned scholar with a full bookcase you would be vehemently presented with theories that the human body is founded upon the four humors, or that the earth is flat and the sun and planets revolve around it. Nevertheless, such a *quantity* of belief would still be hopelessly wrong.

In any case, as was stressed earlier, beliefs are just not consistent among reincarnation believers (see Chapters 11 & 12). Thus, bodhisattvas form part of Buddhist belief, but not of Hinduism or Kabbalism. Karma is believed by both Buddhism and Hinduism but not by the Druze or Tlingits. Also, it could be asked, if thinkers like Plato believed in Zeus or Origen believed in Jesus's bodily ascension into heaven, were they deluded? Perhaps, but it was simply part of their religion to think that way.

And however “holy” certain figures in Hinduism and Buddhism are claimed to be, their teachings nevertheless remain unacceptable to Christians and Muslims who trust only Christ and Mohammed as the teachers of ultimate truth. Lastly, Bhodisattvas, don’t appear to have had too much impact on human bad behavior so far!

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31. Reincarnation Not In Original Hinduism Or Buddhism!

Even if impressive scientific knowledge, such as modern electricity, is found in the Atharva Veda, that does not amount to the equation: Artharva Veda is scientific, therefore reincarnation must be scientifically correct too. This is because, just as Karma was not originally a part of reincarnation belief systems (see Chapter 29), so reincarnation, in turn, was not part of the original Veda -the Rig Veda. Koenrad Elst writes:

*'The Rig-Veda...does not contain the doctrine of reincarnation at all, and it is a post-Rig-Vedic text that explicitly introduces it... the Chandogya Upanishad. The Brahmin young man Shvetaketu,,has learned all Vedic knowledge...Has he learned what happens to us after death? No, admits Shvetaketu...'*¹

The Antithesis

Thus, the original Vedas had no set teachings regarding the afterlife, and the central tenet of the Upanishad- reincarnation- is therefore not derived from Vedic teachings. Moreover, in the later offshoots, the concept of rebirth differed in essence from the mother religion, i.e. Hinduism:

*'In Buddhism and Jainism, reincarnation is absolutely central... In Hinduism...the core doctrine in its original form is not dependent on it. ...Buddhism in its Zen form has rediscovered this view, where the here and now is all-important and beliefs about past lives or the afterlife don't matter. Hindus...have become crypto-Buddhists and have come to believe that liberation means stopping the wheel of reincarnation.'*²

The later changes to Hinduism were dramatic from what went before, as Ramendra Nath, who renounced the religion, attests:

*'The religion that we find in the Vedas... has little to do with contemporary Brahminism. In fact...the oldest of the Vedas, the Rig Veda... is the very antithesis of Brahminism, what with its celebration of beef-eating, gambling, drinking and sexual orgies...contemporary Brahminism was largely consolidated in the post-Vedic age called the 'Brahmana period.'*³

The 'beef-eating' bit is especially ironic as the cow is now considered sacred in Hinduism. Besides which, some Hindu wise men later denounced reincarnation. For example, philosopher and lecturer Jeddu Krishnamurti, called reincarnation a '*A theory of the lazy*'.⁴ Likewise, Sri Yogananda channeled, posthumously, that '*There is no such mechanism as reincarnation*'⁵ even though, as a Hindu, he had believed in it while in his earth life.

Denied

Moreover, as with Hinduism, there is an original school of thought within Buddhism- that of its founder, Gautama, himself:

*'[Buddha] actually denies reincarnation or the separate existence of consciousness. There's a passage in the San Yu (text) where he says the idea that consciousness can exist independently of the physical environment is impossible. He says that in black and white.'*⁶

In spite of which, the doctrine remains a central tenet of Buddhism. According to another Buddhist authority,

*'The dying pass through several illusory bardo states generated by their own minds before entering the "real" afterlife.'*⁷

This "real" afterlife is what, Spiritualists contend, awaits us all. There are no "eternal truths". Time, culture and politics mold ideas.

Otherwise, reincarnation would have been an indispensable tenet from the beginning.

The Dalai Lama And Attachment

In Chapter 12, we saw the disagreement between the Hindu notion of the “self” and the Buddhist “stream of consciousness”. And as we saw, the “stream” concept could not have originated with Buddha himself. What then of the “self” of Hinduism? Well, throughout this book, I have supported the notion that we have an essential spirit and that this is, indeed, the agent behind past life “memories”. I must therefore come down forcefully on the side of the “self” rather than the “stream” idea.

In this light, I would argue that even the choosing of the Dalai Lama- the most sacred event in Buddhism- can be explained as spirit attachment, rather than these great holy men successively reincarnating. Thus, the previous Dalai Lama may be simply earthbound, owing to his prior belief in reincarnation. Inspired by this sacred tradition, he attaches himself to the new child he has selected to “reincarnate” into. It is then no great feat to transfer his memories, so that the potential new Dalai Lama can pass the tests he needs to.

NOTES

1. vedkabhed.com/no-rebirth-in-the-rig-veda
2. *ibid.*
3. Nath, Ramendra. *Why I Left Hinduism (infidels.org)*
4. Wickland, Carl *The Gateway Of Understanding*, p.218. National Psychological Institute Inc. Los Angeles, CA. (1934)
5. Cutler, Geoff. *Is Reincarnation An Illusion?* p.2. Lulu Books (2021).
6. Batchelor, Stephen on *Skeptics.com*.
7. Fox, p 94

32. Christianity Doesn't Support Reincarnation

There is a popular concept that the Bible, even Jesus himself, teaches reincarnation. While I do not claim to be a Christian -preferring to follow the more recent evidence of the afterlife found in Spiritualism- I can see how such beliefs might arise and also how they can be dismissed. Here are some of the more popular Bible quotes claimed to imply rebirth.

Karma or A Higher Purpose?

The first incident is of the blind man to whom Jesus is said to have restored sight.

And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" . Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.' (John 9:2-3)

Hence, the purpose behind the man's blindness was not to punish him for sins in a previous life, but to show the world the powers of Christ and the Holy Spirit. If the principle of free will outlined already is indeed applicable, then maybe the man in question agreed to this before embarking on his (solitary, I would insist) incarnation in this world. Those who appealed to Jesus were thinking within the retributive "an eye for an eye" mind-set of first century Jews (as a few modern Islamic societies still do). Thus,

'Behind this question was the assumption that suffering and affliction are the results of personal guilt... that God was punishing that person for some sin in their life... This assumption is wrong-headed. The Bible doesn't deny that God sometimes uses affliction to punish evil or correct sin, but that is not the only reason an individual might

*suffer...the Scriptures are littered with God's use of trials and difficulties for higher purposes.*¹

Jesus was confirming this higher purpose, while overturning the previous notion. Additionally,

*'Jesus Himself warned against thinking that someone is more sinful than you are just because they suffer more than you... Jesus' admonition echoes far beyond the misconceptions of these first-century Jews. It challenges this lie throughout all nations and all ages... When the Hindu says that a man's troubles are the result of his own deeds in either this life or some previous life, he is falling into the same sort of error, and Jesus is rebuking him just as strongly.'*²

Why John Was Not Previously Elijah...

Another popular Bible reference quoted by reincarnation believers is that John was the old prophet Elijah reborn. However, this can be dismissed by simple logic

*'We can be assured that John was not literally a reincarnation of Elijah by a later incident recorded in the Gospels. After John's death...at Jesus' transfiguration... Peter, James, and John, saw Moses and Elijah with Jesus (Matt. 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). Now, if Elijah had been reincarnated as John the Baptist, he would no longer be Elijah, but John. Yet after John's death, both Elijah and Moses were still living in the spiritual world as themselves. Many centuries after they had lived and breathed on earth, they had not been reincarnated and become someone else.'*³

Moreover, Moses and Elijah were thus seen 1,500 years after their deaths, representing one hell of a time period between incarnations.

...And Not Elias Either

Reincarnationists also take for another example, the passage in the Gospels where the Jews ask the prophet John ‘Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No’ (Jn. 1:21). Not only does John deny such a connection, but there’s another problem:

‘The obvious absurdity of taking this to be proof of the soul’s reincarnation can be seen in the fact that the fiery Prophet Elias was taken alive into Heaven, which means that he did not die... In the Gospels it is stated outright about St. John the Baptist: he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias (Lk. 1:17), and not in some mythical reincarnation.’⁴

Unrepeatable

It may be argued that certain writings have been omitted from the bible, including some which support reincarnation, especially among some of the Gnostic gospels. It is undoubtedly the case that many books became apocryphal or were just disregarded. However, this does not mean that the omitted writings carry any more authority than the canonical scriptures. As we saw in Chapter 30, much of the Hindu texts leave much to be desired scientifically, And in any case, Hindu (and Buddhist) philosophy have have changed radically through time, with reincarnation and Karma being later additions. Likewise, some of the Gnostic writings, like the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* are quite inane. However, the main reason for the omission could well be, as James Webster underlined,(Chapter 14) that

‘The idea of reincarnation completely contradicts biblical teaching.... Throughout all the books of Holy Scripture runs the portrayal of man as the image and likeness of God, of the uniqueness and unrepeatable nature of each and every human individual. The belief that a soul can reincarnate and become a different human being is utterly incompatible with this.’⁵

Thus, those early church fathers believed in this ‘unrepeatable nature’ of each individual. Indeed, this is my own position, though in my case as a non-Christian. And while this is not the place for intensive Bible study, I am sure that appropriate research into the scriptures by those who take them seriously, will find it hard to refute the following, pretty unequivocal proclamation:

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.
(Heb. 9:27)

This statement is wholly incompatible with reincarnation, but perfectly compatible with the notion of a single unique life, followed by the judgement that we saw in Chapter 29.

NOTES

1. *Does John 9:2 on the man born blind really imply reincarnation?* | carm.org
2. *ibid.*
3. leewoof.org/the-bible-emanuel-swedenborg-and-reincarnation
4. *Can the Gospel of the Blind Man be Used to Support Belief in Reincarnation?* / OrthoChristian.Com
5. *ibid.*

33. Case Dismissed!

Even when we have dismissed Cryptomnesia/Confabulation, and simple fraud as explanations, there remains, nevertheless, a phenomenon that cannot be explained by materialists resorting to the “unconscious” mind. However, neither can reincarnation adequately explain the following factors:

1. Why the great majority of past life personalities that people recall spontaneously have died either violently or prematurely.
2. Why, at a certain very young age, there are noticeable changes in the personality and demeanor of a child experiencing “past life” recall.
3. Why a child’s problems-and “memories” cease, often abruptly, when mediums of the caliber of Anna Wickland are able to identify obsessing/possessing spirits and convince them to move on.
4. Likewise, why, after treatment, the child invariably resumes its original personality
5. Why, almost always, a child forgets the spontaneous memories it has had by a certain age, usually no later than about 8 years old.
6. Conversely, why sometimes people don’t begin remembering past lives until their mature years (as we saw in the case of Uttara and the person named Q in Dwairy’s study). The gap between birth and the age the “memories” begin doesn’t fit a reincarnation narrative.
7. Similarly, why in more mature people, past life memories only begin after hypnotherapy. If they are genuine memories -and not due to cryptomnesia- could these memories be down to “spirits in the room”? While the majority of these spirits will try to reincarnate in

children, it is also possible they may become entangled in the magnetic aura of more mature people also.

8. Why there are often gaps in the narrative of the past life and I important details are omitted.

9. Why only a very small number of people remember a past life of any sort, outside of PLR, even after we have had over a century's exposure to New Age ideas

10. Why the great majority of cases of past life recall occur in societies like India which readily accept reincarnation and where, as we have seen, there are always large amounts of earthbound spirits hanging about, trying to reincarnate.

The above factors, I submit, are incompatible with true past life memories, and therefore the case for reincarnation may be safely dismissed. On the other hand, the spirit theory can explain each of the above conditions. The following should also be considered:

1. What are the author's or vlogger's motives in researching possible cases of reincarnation? Could money or the need to earn a living be a prime motive ?

2. Likewise, might the families of the "past life" individual have a vested financial interest in a claim of reincarnation, such as money from book sales, TV appearances, etc or simply just fame and a rise in social status?

3. Less materialistically, might the proponent of reincarnation simply be promoting the doctrine, believing it to be the only possibility of an afterlife. We have seen that reincarnation is certainly not the only show in town.

4. Is it possible that cryptomnesia can explain the subject's memories? We have seen how amazing the brain is at storing obscure memories and information.

5. Are past life memories in each case the result of psychic abilities, especially in children, and even some adults who retain such powers? Might Sheldrake's "*Morphic Resonance*" be a valid phenomenon after all?

Conclusion

In this book I have examined some of the best-known cases claimed to be suggestive of reincarnation, including some which present particular difficulties, and pointed out their weaknesses. Obviously I cannot discuss the multitude of cases presented in books or on the internet. I hope, however, that I have at least given the reader pause for thought, and some tools with which to re-evaluate the evidence for themselves. And while I certainly think it is only good science to try to rationalize a case first before we get carried away with paranormal explanations, I believe there is just too much evidence in favor of what we still call the “supernatural.” For, although cryptomnesia still remains a perfectly adequate explanation in many, perhaps most, cases, the spirit hypothesis seems to be the only one capable of answering all the difficult paranormal questions regarding “past lives”.

Evidence?

When Ian Stevenson published the first real studies about “past life memories”- especially those involving children- there was little in the way of a counter-argument. Those books that did provide alternative explanations, such as Wickland, Tweedale and Hyslop, were either obscure or out of print altogether. However, all that has now changed, and we have seen that, contrary to its proponents’ claims, the only real “evidence” for reincarnation is that of past life memories – especially those of children- birthmarks and xenoglossy. Yet, as we have seen, these elements can be otherwise explained, either by cryptomnesia or spirit obsession/overshadowing, or else, by impressions upon the fetus in the manner of stigmata, either by the mother or by an exterior spirit agency. As for xenoglossy, or “speaking in tongues”, rather than a “clincher” for reincarnation that Ian Stevenson believed it to be, it is common in spiritualist circles, just as it was back in the time of Acts of the Apostles.

Inconsistent

We have also seen how many “past life” memories are really confabulation, produced by our amazing brains and powers of recall. We have seen, too, that reincarnation, rather than being a universally consistent process, is actually a free-for-all, with major discrepancies between both hypnotists and cultures: a LBL v. no LBL; Karma v. no Karma; sex-change v. no sex-change; choice v. no choice, etc etc. Meanwhile, population growth presents a seemingly insurmountable barrier to any process of rebirth. We saw also that Karma as a moving force seems particularly problematic and unworkable,

Pivotal

Not least, the serious anomalies I have cited, in Chapter 2, went largely unnoticed by Stevenson’s readers. We saw there that the cases of Jasbir Jat and the Buddhist monk (Chapter 2) are pivotal in providing evidence that spirits can obsess the living with all the memories that once were assumed to be transmissible only via reincarnation. Except that, in both cases, the living person and the “past life” had been contemporaries of each other, contrary to the normal requirement that the previous person die before the new host is born! Stephen Blake emphasizes just how significant Jasbir’s case really is, by countering Wambach and Zammit’s claim that paranormal information is convincing evidence of reincarnation:

‘Jasbir - who was not a reincarnation of Sobha Ram - possessed more detailed information about a previous life than Helen Wambach’s subjects. The case of Jasbir alone is sufficient to refute all claims that recondite or hard-to-obtain information retrieved under hypnotic regression is evidence of reincarnation. That Jasbir’s case has been woefully ignored by reincarnationists is a testament to their lack of objectivity.’¹

We saw further inconsistencies in the shared past lives of the American and the Druze boys which, likewise, helped remove a central pillar of reincarnation. Meanwhile, changes in personality and tastes after transplants (Chapter 26) or while suffering DID (MPD) provides yet another conundrum for the notion that such phenomena can only be attributed to past lives.

Rare

And even if children's recollections of past lives were well-grounded, the number of cases compared to world population suggests that they must be still exceedingly rare. Ian Stevenson compiled around 2,500 cases. With the work of Dr Jim Tucker, Dr Helen Wambach and others, let us call the number of cases claimed at around 20,000 altogether. This collection of cases began in the 1950s. Now, compare the total world population from that time to the present, i.e. just over two generations. Around 5 billion people have been born since that time. A rudimentary equation gives the numbers of cases claimed to be of reincarnation as 1 in 500,000-hardly an impressive statistic! Indeed, as Richard Norman observes:

*'We have to recognize that such unexplained phenomena are extremely rare and therefore no evidence at all for reincarnation as a regular occurrence that happens to us all.'*²

Suppressed?

The ever-imaginative Ian Stevenson puts this down to Western parents suppressing any talk suggestive of reincarnation by their children.³ But, as Paul Edwards points out, such a claim would be

'A total surprise to child psychologists and teachers in the West who would presumably notice such claims and behavior. Several of my closest friends were kindergarten teachers for extended periods, and they never noticed any such thing...A.S.Neill, the founder of

*Summerhill... in the fifty-four years he headed the school... did not once come across a Stevenson case.*⁴

Misconception

I submit that rebirth is not a “natural” process, but rather, the result of a major misconception fueled by spirit obsession and overshadowing. This has resulted in, I have come to believe, centuries of erroneous teachings. In short, reincarnationists misunderstand the nature of spirits and how they can influence us mortals. Believing that you can achieve your goals by living again is, I would insist, grossly mistaken. To be completely fair to Ian Stevenson, his research, despite its criticisms (see Chapters 19 and 28), did much spade work in uncovering the eerie knowledge shown by children of other lives, though obviously I would argue not their *own* past lives. I will also be assumed that at least some of Stevenson’s discoveries were based upon facts he received. I am not questioning Stevenson’s integrity here, only that he may himself have been the victim of deceit in some cases at least. In any case, we have the work of other researchers, after Stevenson, which must be considered.

Cautious

But even here, we must be cautious in what we accept. Researchers may claim literally thousands of clients, but are they all verifiable? And even if they are, this would certainly not preclude spirits as being behind the information obtained (see Chapters 3 & 5). We have seen how the work of some of the most celebrated reincarnation researchers- including Ian Stevenson (see Chapters 2, 19 & 28) Jim Tucker (Chapters 19 & 20), Arthur Guirdham (Chapter 19) Michael Newton (Chapter 1) and Murray Bernstein (Chapter 21) contain major flaws.

Stevenson and Guirdham also seem to have been suspiciously elusive regarding certain of their claims. And in another twist, researcher Joe Fisher, who worked with Joel Whitton, abandoned reincarnation, when, on the verge of a mental breakdown, he realized that the “past

lives” he was investigating, were actually low level spiritual entities- *‘Imposters, masters of deception, brainwashing me...it was magnificently done.’*⁵ Indeed we saw already how low level spirits deceive mortals (see Chapter 25), thus many cases of past lives could be due to these entities having their fun at our expense!

We must also remember Stevenson’s low opinion of “past lives” due to PLR- which is so popular nowadays- calling them fantasies and even dangerous (see Chapter 1). Stevenson also considered possession as an alternative to reincarnation (see Chapter 17), but wrongly, I believe, chose to go down the latter road.

Dream

Even if a past life believer discovered something remarkable like buried treasure, this would still not constitute proof of reincarnation. as spirit influence could still be at work, through remembering where the spirit involved buried the treasure and planting its own memories into the mortal it has become associated with. Indeed, there is a famous episode from history on just such a point, whereby the Italian poet Dante appeared posthumously to his son in a dream and revealed the location of some lost cantos of *The Divine Comedy* hidden in an obscure recess. And as we saw with Stradivarius and Charles Tweedale, spirits communicate important information telepathically, as well as via dreams. However, many spirits are not as advanced or as benevolent as Dante or Stradivarius. Some remain, as Carl Wickland reflected,

*‘Lost and confused... attracted to the magnetic light which emanates from mortals...attach themselves...influencing, obsessing or possessing.’*⁶

Trapped

Sadly, some attached spirits resort to goading their host to commit suicide in order to become disentangled. Similarly, some suicides are

committed by people desperately trying to rid themselves of obsessing spirits! For years, the Wicklands treated patients who were driven mad by such spirits who had become trapped in their magnetic aura. The spirit of William Stanley, who had been a Theosophist in life, described his own adult mind being trapped inside a toddler's body, as 'the worst torture'.⁷ Thankfully the Wicklands were able to release his offending spirit and so relieve both spirit and victim of the suffering. However,

*'It is precisely the illusion of reincarnation that keeps unwanted spirits anchored in the host's body, with no one to... challenge their presence where it does not belong. These clinging entities... need to move upward into the spirit realm.'*⁸

To repeat, reincarnation is *not* "natural". Indeed, the magnetic aura around the living is there to protect mortals from spirit interference. And, surely, trying to reincarnate inside a newborn is the ultimate interference? And it is the aura's very protection which renders souls especially likely, In seeking to reincarnate, to become trapped instead.

Do not be among them!

Epilog: A Personal Story...

A friend told me recently that, one day, a neighbor's four year old daughter suddenly put her hands on her hips and announced precociously, 'I was a teacher when I was big.' The little girl even located the school she had taught- somewhere she had never been! 'Aha, gotcha.' the reincarnationist will declare triumphantly, 'Clear proof she had been a teacher in a previous life!'

But not so fast!...

The friend then told me that a medium at her local Spiritualist church later channeled the identical information. This changes everything,

because, if the message was now being relayed, presumably, by a spirit, then that spirit cannot be also reincarnated in the child. On the contrary, the situation confirms the spirit theory, rather than reincarnation and is reminiscent of Ann Frank's spirit communicating with mediums, while supposedly "reincarnated" in Barbro Karlen. We may now surmise that the schoolteacher's spirit had temporarily occupied the child but had then- perhaps being someone responsible while alive- realized it was troubling her victim and had sensibly sought out, instead, a place where help was available.

NOTES

1. Blake M.Sc (Lond), Stephen. *Reincarnation Refuted - Evidence, Logic and Common Sense*, p. 276. Grosvenor House Publishing.
2. Norman, Richard *On Humanism*, p.72. Routledge (2012).
- 3 Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, 1974, p 396
4. Edwards, Paul *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*, p.268. Prometheus. Amherst,NY, (1996)
5. Fisher, Joe *The Siren Call Of Hungry Ghosts*, p. 224. Paraview, NY (2001)
6. Wickland, Carl (1924) *Thirty Years Among The Dead*. Global Grey Books. Ebook (2018 edition)
7. *ibid.*
8. Martinez, Susan B. *Delusions in Science and Spirituality*, pp.310-311. Bear And Company. Rochester, Vt. (2015).

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